

**ACPL ITEM
DISCARDED**

PUBLIC LIBRARY
FORT WAYNE & ALLEN CO., IND.

B1142

C168866

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

of

Fort Wayne and Allen County, Ind.
Information For Country Borrowers

Books are free to all residents of Allen County. They may be borrowed from the Main Library at Fort Wayne or from any Branch, Reading Room, Deposit Station or School Library in Allen County.

Books will be sent by parcel post, prepaid to any borrower living a distance from a Library Station.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT
ANTHONY 3333

LIBRARY BUREAU CAT. NO. 1165

C168866

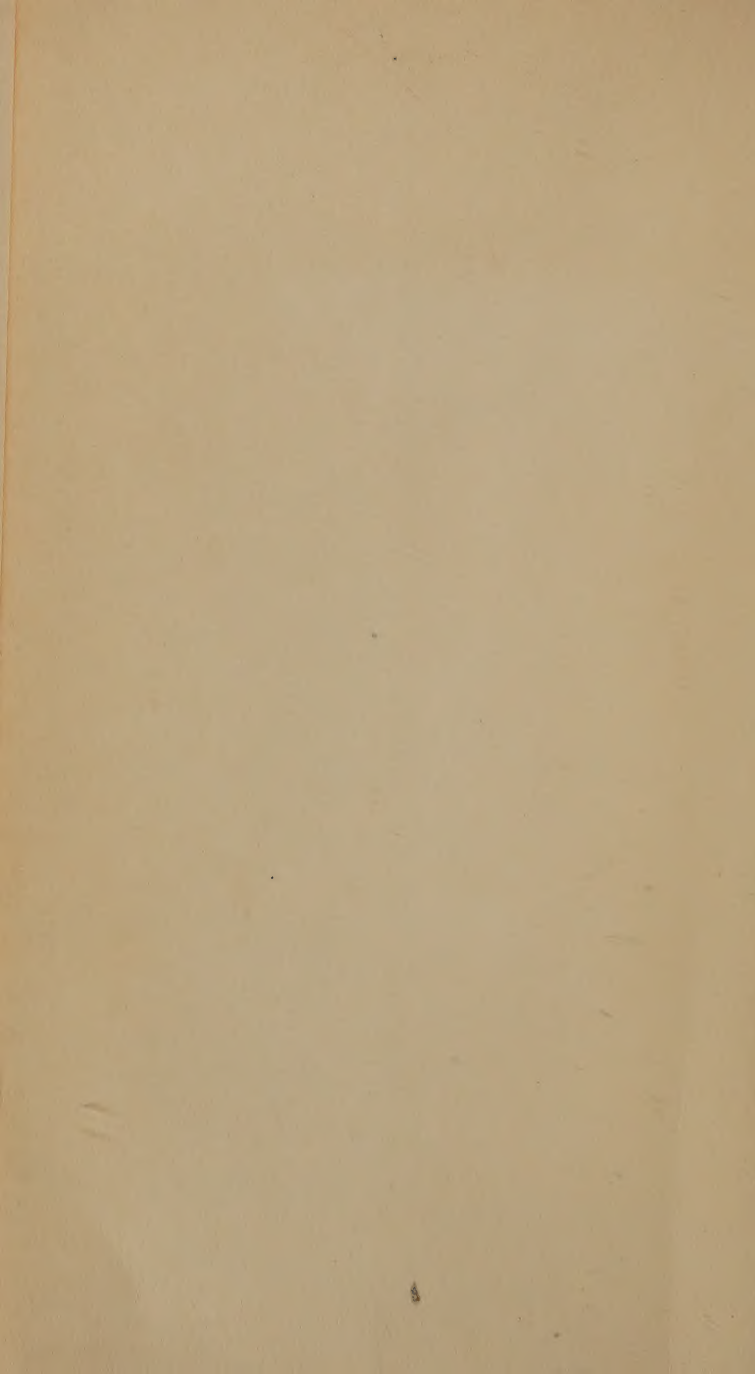
cock

be Lincoln

010 ✓
1833 00036 3002
**ACPL ITEM
DISCARDED**

Date

51

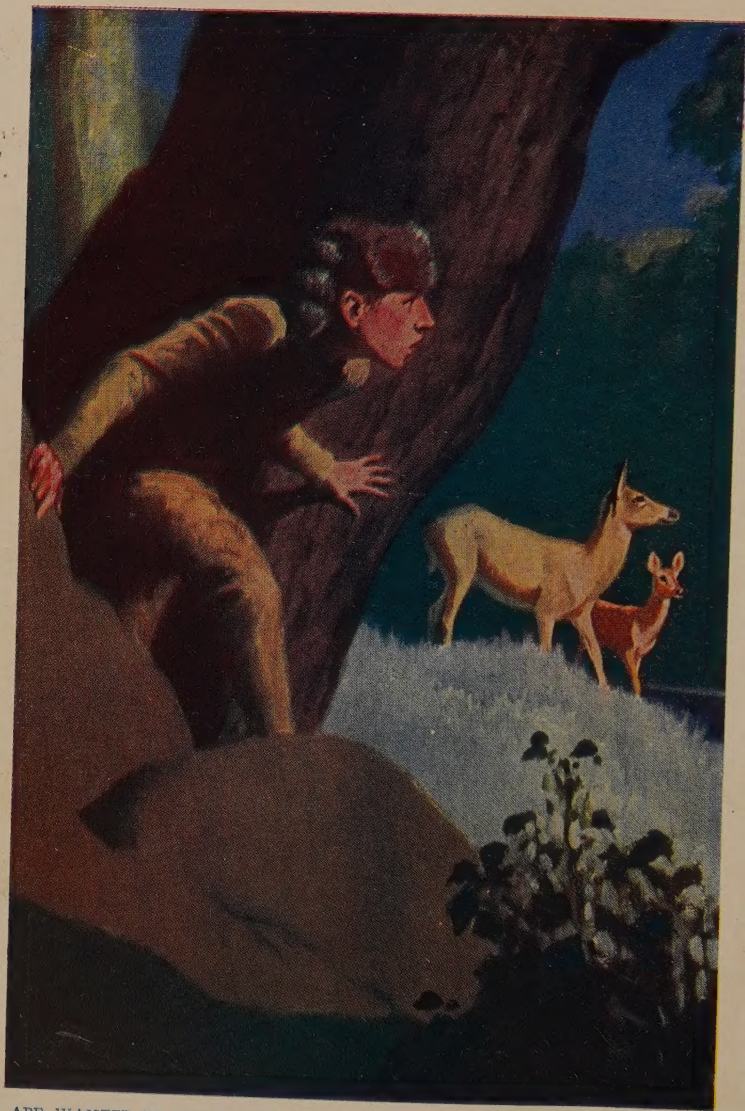




LITTLE ABE LINCOLN

LETTER AND ENVELOPE





ABE WANTED TO JUMP OUT AND SHOUT, BUT HE KNEW IT WAS NO USE

Page 104

LITTLE ABE LINCOLN

BY
BERNIE BABCOCK

AUTHOR OF "THE SOUL OF ANN RUTLEDGE,"
"THE SOUL OF ABE LINCOLN," ETC.

FRONTISPIECE BY
W. H. WOLF



JB 1141

PHILADELPHIA & LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1926. BY BERNIE BABCOCK

ELEVENTH IMPRESSION

PRINTED IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NANCY HANKS LINCOLN

Little gray mother

The years have been long
Since the touch of your hand
And your lullaby song.

The wee ones that nestled
Against your warm breast,
These too have long gone
To their beautiful rest.

The one in Life's springtime, unwritten in story:

The one at Life's noontime, to immortal glory.
They loved you though lost for a time
from their view,

And little gray, patient gray,
loving gray mother—We love you too.

DO. SCHOOL
C168866

A wildwood story of childish joy and sorrow, of adventure and achievement, for children of all ages, bringing to life and light the obscure childhood of Abraham Lincoln and his sister Sarah.

There is not a fictitious character in this story and the main incidents have a sound and accurate historical basis.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. IN THE WILDWOOD	11
II. THE STORM BABY	18
III. LITTLE GRAY MOTHER	26
IV. PLAYDAYS	34
V. "BACK UP, BIG CAT!"	42
VI. HOW GOD TALKS	53
VII. TREE TOADS	60
VIII. NO TRAPPER	66
IX. "GOOD-BY KENTUCK"	72
X. THE NEW HOME	78
XI. TOPKNOT'S MIRACLE	85
XII. WOLVES	92
XIII. CHICKEN-HEARTED ABE	101
XIV. LONG-TAILED GOBBLERS	107
XV. MUSIC	114
XVI. ACROSS THE CRYSTAL SEA	121
XVII. "DEAR TRACKS"	129
XVIII. THE ROOST	132
XIX. ABE HAS A FUNERAL	141
XX. "LET'S DIE, ABE"	146
XI. "WE'RE AWFUL RICH!"	153
XII. "TILDY, TELL THE TRUTH"	163
XIII. NOAH'S ARK	171
XIV. THE SNAKE BITE	179

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXV. THE ROBBERS.....	186
XXVI. SOFT SOAP AND COLORS.....	193
XXVII. RED AND BLACK AND WHITE.....	200
XXVIII. A DIRTY TRICK.....	206
XXIX. AROUND THE FIRE.....	211
XXX. SUNDAY BREAD AND SINNERS.....	218
XXXI. SCHOOL DAYS.....	225
XXXII. ABE WHIPS A BULLY.....	232
XXXIII. CANDY PULLING AND HAIR PULLING.....	240
XXXIV. "TILDY'S A PIG".....	249
XXXV. THANKSGIVING.....	257
NOTES.....	267

LITTLE ABE LINCOLN

CHAPTER I

IN THE WILDWOOD

“Come back! Come back! Baby, you’re running away again! Come right *straight* back here! Sarah, don’t you *hear* me? There’s bears in the woods! *Come back!*”

But the more little Sarah was called, the faster the small feet travelled, until her mother, who was following, caught the runaway baby in her arms, saying again, “There’s bears in the woods—*bears!* See right over there where your mother got wood for the morning fire? I found fresh tracks there—big ones. Like enough, a great big bear is hiding over there somewhere, this very minute.”

“Want ’im. Want ’im,” the little child said, stretching her hands in the direction of the forest.

“No, no. You do not want a bear.”

“Want ’im.” Sarah kept saying it over and over, trying to pull away from her mother’s arms and go to the woods.

“I guess what you want is the pretty striped squirrel you chased yesterday. He

ran into the woods. Is that what you want—the pretty squirrel?”

“Want ’im,” was Sarah’s reply. “Want ’im.”

“Poor baby! You don’t know the difference between a squirrel and a bear. Let me tell you about bears,” and sitting down on the cabin step where the path commenced, Sarah’s mother began, “A bear is a great big animal, taller than your father when it stands on its hind legs. It has strong arms, sharp claws, and big teeth. Once a bear carried a baby away, and nobody ever heard of the poor little thing again. Its mother went nearly crazy. There’s wildcats in the woods, too—and panthers. Just last week I heard a panther screeching down by the spring. It was a fearful screech. I thought surely it would wake you up. But you slept on in your cradle, just as if there was no such thing as a big, hungry panther. Panthers have sharper claws than bears and their teeth are like knives.

“But none of the wild beasts of the dark woods can get my little Sarah if she stays with her mother, for mother keeps a gun handy day and night, and nothing can get into our cabin. Look at the logs. See how strong our house is? No bear can pull these

logs down, nor can any wolf or panther break the door open.”

The log cabin in which little Sarah lived had been built about three years before by a man named Thomas Lincoln * for his bride, who was Nancy Hanks.

The wedding and the feast of Thomas and Nancy were long to be remembered. Everybody went to weddings in those days, whether they were invited or not. It was summer-time and the table for the wedding feast had been set under the green trees. This table was fairly loaded with good things to eat. There were turkey meat, deer meat, bear meat, and a whole roasted sheep. There were peach jam and pickles, ginger cake and doughnuts, wild eggs boiled hard, a big heap of red apples, plenty of honey, and so much cider guests drank it from buckets with gourd dippers.

After the preacher, who had come a long way to marry Thomas and Nancy, had said the words that made Nancy Hanks the wife of Thomas Lincoln, everybody gathered around the long table and ate and drank, told jokes and laughed.

When the feast was all over, Thomas took Nancy in his arms and put her on his horse, which was waiting under a tree near by. Then, springing up beside her, he kicked his horse

* See note 1.

in the ribs and they rode away to the new cabin home while all the people shouted and clapped their hands.

The new home, which Thomas had built, was near Nolin Creek, three miles from a settlement called Hodginsville in Kentucky, and for a time he stayed around home chopping wood, bringing water from the spring, finishing the stick and mud chimney, and making a couple of chairs.

But Thomas Lincoln had never stayed in one place long and soon went away to fish and hunt, as he had always done.

Nancy was not afraid for she could shoot well. But she was lonesome alone in the woods and was very happy when a dear little girl baby came to sleep in the cradle which Thomas had made, and be company for her. This little girl was named Sarah.

Even as a baby Sarah was company for her mother, and when she was old enough to partly understand what her mother said, Nancy began showing her the beautiful things about their wildwood home and telling her stories of them.

Sometimes they sat together on the cabin step and watched the sun go down and Nancy talked about the sky.

“See those long streaks of red?” she said.
“They reach from the hill above the spring

to the timber line on the other side. They're big enough to have been painted with a brush made from the tallest tree on the hill. Nobody but God can make things so big and beautiful."

And when the red had gone and only pink-rimmed golden clouds lay piled in the west, Nancy told Sarah the sky looked like heaven, where angels live, for Nancy believed in God and heaven and angels and told her baby girl about them.

When Sarah could walk Nancy took her to hunt flowers. There were wild roses, pink like the edge of the sunset clouds. There were violets, and bluets the color of the June sky so high above them. Sometimes they found bright red flowers growing like little trumpets on stiff stems.

Sarah loved the flowers, but to her the birds were more wonderful. Flowers could not move from their places, but birds could go from tree to tree. And flowers could not make any noise, while birds could sing. There were many birds around the place where Nancy washed at the spring, flitting from tree to tree and flashing across open spaces like bits of blue and yellow and black made into bouquets.

Of all the birds that sang around the cabin home, Nancy thought the red bird the most

beautiful and liked its song the best, and it was the red bird Sarah first came to know by sight.

The first time she ever saw one was at the spring, when, like a swiftly floating red flower, he came from a thicket and perched on the edge of the spring's rock roof.

Screaming with joy, little Sarah clapped her hands, and as swiftly as he had come, the red bird flew away.

"You scared the pretty bird," Nancy said. "If you had kept still he would have sung for us. If he comes again, keep your eyes and ears wide open and look at him, but put your hand over your mouth."

Sarah did not see the red bird at the spring again, but one day as she and her mother sat on the door-step, he came into a tree not far away. Nancy put her finger over Sarah's lips and they listened.

After waiting long enough to display his suit of cardinal with its smooth-feathered vest, its trim wings and tail, and handsome crested cap, the red bird began his whistling song, his throat swelling with the glad melody.

After this he came near the house several times and Sarah never once frightened him away.

But it was in the summer that the red bird

sang and the wildwood was lovely with flowers and vines.

As autumn came the woods and thickets grew silent except for the chattering voice of the jay, for the songsters had gone. The leaves on the forest trees turned yellow and red and brown and fell to the ground, leaving the trees bare and gray.

"Where are the flowers?" little Sarah asked one day as she walked with her mother in the autumn woods.

"They have gone to sleep, little Sarah. They will sleep until springtime, when they will wake up, their beautiful pink and purple and blue faces all fresh and sweet-smelling. Sometimes it seems their sleeping time, winter, is long and dreary. But it's the way God planned, so it's bound to be all right."

CHAPTER II

THE STORM BABY

"NANCY! Come here. I want to show you something."

It was Thomas Lincoln calling. He had just brought in a deer, which he had killed in the woods, and wanted to show his wife something about it.

"Feel this skin," he said when she came out. "Put your fingers in it. Did you ever feel anything so thick on the hide of a deer? It's like fur."

"Almost as thick as the fur on the last coon we had," Nancy said, pressing her fingers into the soft hair.

"You know what it's a sign of," Thomas said, "and by this sign we're going to have the coldest winter ever seen in these parts. I've been ketching furry critters twenty years and I haven't seen such thick fur as I've seen this winter."

"I wonder how the animals know when to grow thick fur? How do the dumb creatures know when it's going to be a cold winter?"

"They don't know."

"*Something* knows, or it wouldn't be so."

"It's their instinct tells them."

"Instinct? Well, what's instinct—what tells instinct? Who made instinct? It must be God does it."

"I reckon you're right. Bound to be something does it and God's about the only one as can see what kind of weather's coming so far ahead. Pity human critters can't put on extra skin for cold weather."

"God gives people sense enough to build houses and make fires to keep warm. There's plenty of trees for wood around here too."

Thomas Lincoln liked to hunt better than to cut trees and chop wood, but he kept a pretty good pile most of the time for Nancy and Sarah.

January, 1809, was a cold month. Nancy Lincoln had not been very well for several weeks and Sarah had a bad cold. So Thomas Lincoln stayed home more time than usual and there was always wood to keep the cabin warm.

Early in February there came a mild spell of weather, several days that felt almost like spring, and Thomas Lincoln told Nancy he was going out on a hunt to get a bear or deer.

"Thomas," Nancy said, "please, please don't be gone long this time. I don't feel my best. Sometimes you stay away so long. Usually I don't care—not so awful much. But this time, don't stay long."

“I’ll not be gone long and I’ll get you plenty of wood before I leave.”

So Thomas Lincoln chopped some wood and piled it near the cabin door. Then, after promising Nancy he would not stay long, with his knives in his belt, his powder horn well filled, and his gun over his shoulder, he went away into the forest.

Three days after he had gone Nancy began looking for her husband. Even with the mild weather, the wood-pile was getting low. At the end of four days the wood was gone.

“If it stays warm,” Nancy said, “dead wood will do and I can find enough of that for a day or two,” and she went out to see what could be found.

Before she returned to the house, a wind began blowing which caused her some uneasiness. “If it gets into the north it means a storm,” Nancy said, “and lots of wood.”

After a while she found, not far from the house, a medium-sized dead tree which she determined to cut down and drag to the house.

Hurrying back to the cabin for the axe, as the wind was steadily rising, Nancy, after looking into the cabin to see that Sarah was all right, returned to the dead tree and began her task of chopping.

Several times she stopped to rest. Once she sat on the ground for a moment, dropped

her face in her hands, saying, "I don't see how I can do it." But even as she sat she was reminded that she must make haste as a gust of wind directly from the north struck her in the back, blowing a shower of dead leaves around her and stinging her ears.

At last the tree was down. After breaking off the smaller branches, which she could carry in her arms, Nancy undertook to drag the tree to the cabin. This would have been no easy job for Thomas Lincoln. For a little woman like Nancy, who was not very strong, it was indeed hard work, and only fear of the coming storm lent strength to her legs and back and arms.

When the tree was at last beside the cabin, she worked rapidly breaking up wood and carrying it into the house, for the wind was growing colder and colder every moment.

After working as long as she could on the wood, she made a trip to the spring for water, then bolted her door and sat down before the fire to rest, with little Sarah on her knee.

"It's an awful storm that's coming down on us," she told Sarah. "The wolves have crawled in their caves. The foxes are all curled up tight in their holes. The big bears and panthers have gone to the farthest corners of their dens. The coons and possums have hid in hollow logs, and the birds have

found roosting places on the south side of thickets. Every living thing is hiding from the storm that is coming and some of them will freeze to death if this fearful wind does not quit blowing."

But the wind did not stop blowing. Instead it increased in fury, for it was the blizzard of February eleventh, long remembered in that part of Kentucky.

Many times Nancy Hanks had heard hungry wolves howling in the timber just below the cabin. But never had wolves howled as the wind howled this bitter cold night.

Through the cracks between the logs, it came stinging and biting. Nancy was careful of the wood she had brought in, but it was used up before bedtime and a sheet of ice was forming over the water pail that sat near the fireplace.

They crawled under their quilts without undressing, because Nancy knew that without fire, even in bed, they would need all the covering possible to keep from freezing.

Sarah cuddled close to her mother and was soon asleep. But for Nancy Lincoln there could be no sleep that night with the storm, like some live thing, battling at the door, trying to get in to hurt—even to freeze—her and little Sarah.

Before morning had come Nancy had suf-

ferred so much it seemed to her that the howling wind coming down from the frozen North was a pack of ten thousand wolves, and the cutting cold, that blew across her bed, their tongues, long as swords, licking her. It was the hardest night of her whole life and when morning came she did not try to get out of bed.

For a time Sarah was content to stay under the quilts where it was warm. But, as she grew hungry, she wanted to get up.

A great pain hurt Nancy's heart as little Sarah asked for something to eat, for she knew everything in the house was frozen. There were tears in her eyes as she said, "I've been praying. I think your father will soon be here. Wait a little longer."

Sarah had not waited long before there was a heavy knocking at the door.

"It's your father," Nancy cried with joy. "Pull the latch—catch the bottom of the string. You can reach it. Pull hard."

Snow had sifted in around the latch and the string was stiff, but the knocking continued, and after hard pulling the door flew open and a strange man came in.

"I'm your neighbor Enlow," he explained, shaking the snow from his cap and whiskers. "Two days ago I went up beyond the town on business. I had to get home or I would never

have tackled this storm. As it was I got lost and came here to ask to get warm."

"Thank God you have come," Nancy Lincoln said, "for surely God sent you in answer to my prayer. We have no fire. My husband, Thomas Lincoln, is away—kept by the storm I suppose. We have no wood and it's so cold I've been afraid my baby would freeze." *

"She don't look frozen," Mr. Enlow said, smiling as he glanced at Sarah, whose head was sticking out above the bed covering.

"I don't mean this baby. There's a new baby—a boy child. He came last night."

"A new baby came in this terrible storm? Who was with you?"

With something like a sob Nancy said, "Nobody but God, but His grace and strength was enough. I hope the baby hasn't been chilled. The tree by the door is dry. I dragged it in but, to save me, couldn't break up any more of it."

"I'll have a fire in a jiffy, and we'll all get toasting warm."

Mr. Enlow went out and knocked the snow and ice from the branches, cut them for firewood, and soon had a roaring fire in the Lincoln cabin. Beside this he thawed food for Sarah, made tea for Mrs. Lincoln, and warmed his own cold hands and feet.

* See note 2.

When Thomas Lincoln returned two days later, he found a little son.

"He's a homely little critter," he said, peeping under the cover, "and if there's anything in signs he won't have no easy sailing through this here mortal life. Why on earth did he pick a blizzard to be born in?"

Thomas Lincoln's father, who had been killed by Indians, was named Abraham Lincoln. The good neighbor Enlow, who had helped Nancy in her trouble, had lost a son also called Abraham, whom he had loved very much. So Nancy and Thomas thought Abraham would be a good name for the boy baby.

"Abraham Lincoln, born February 12, 1809," Nancy said, patting the soft cheek under the cover. "God bless my sweet baby."

CHAPTER III

LITTLE GRAY MOTHER *

THE new boy baby, that came to the Lincoln cabin the night of the fearful storm, was put to sleep in the cradle that had been made for Sarah.

The little girl's interest in the new baby was unbounded. Especially was she curious to examine the small body. She wanted to feel the inside of the baby's mouth, which had no teeth as hers had. She poked at the baby's eyes to see if they were fastened in tight and put her finger in his ears to see where the hole went, and she would have rocked the cradle all the time if her mother had not forbidden it.

"You're too little to rock the cradle. You might tip it over," Nancy Lincoln said to Sarah. "We must be careful of the baby, he is so little. When he grows he will play with you. Won't it be lovely to have a little brother to play with?"

One day before going to the spring, Sarah's mother told her to stay with the baby while she was gone.

Taking her place beside the cradle, the

* See note 3.

small nurse looked at her brother until his face began to wrinkle, then his mouth opened, and a series of small yells came from the cradle.

Wider and wider the mouth opened until Sarah wondered what she might see by looking into it. In an effort to see down the crying baby's throat, she climbed against the cradle, tipping it over.

The next moment both little ones were screaming with all their might, baby Abe because he was startled half to death and Sarah because she feared she had killed her brother. When Mrs. Lincoln rescued them from under the quilts she found neither hurt, for which she was thankful.

The first thing a baby sees is light. Baby Abe's mother knew he could see when she noticed his eyes following the light, and she turned his cradle so he could watch the fire when it was not bright enough to make him blink.

The next light the new baby saw was sunlight showing through the cracks of the cabin. He did not know what these long, bright streaks were but he liked to look at them.

The next thing the baby noticed was something moving about him. There was one big, strange thing that came close to him some-

times. He did not know for a long time that it was his father.

Then there was a little thing that made strange noises in his ear and poked and patted him. In time he came to know this moving creature as his sister.

The best moving object that ever came near him was not so large as the first nor so small as the last. It was gray. It moved softly. It lifted him from the cradle and it put him back. When he was frightened, as he was the day Sarah rocked the cradle over and spilled him on the floor, this quiet gray something caught him up, held him close to her soft cheek, and soothed him. (When he was hungry this pleasant something held him to her warm breast and fed him) When he was cold she warmed him. Always she made him feel good, so that he watched her more closely than he did the others, was glad when she came, and if she stayed away too long, cried.

Lying in her arms, the baby boy lifted his eyes one day and saw something beautiful.

It was his mother's face. He looked into her eyes a long time, for there he saw a light unlike the brightness of the fitful fire or the long streaks of sunshine. He did not know yet the light was that of love, that shines in a mother's eyes for her little ones. But he was not too little to know he liked it, and when his

mother's sweet face bent over him, bringing the love-light close, he smiled.

Then his mother would kiss his wee hands and soft baby cheeks, brush the silky hair on the small, round head and say, "You sweet darling baby!"

Baby Abe was strong and active, and soon after he had learned to sit alone he began trying to crawl. He had a good many tumbles but he kept trying, and in a few weeks could travel on his feet and hands like a big four-legged bug or a monkey.

The next thing he learned was to pull himself up by a chair. The first time Nancy saw him let go of the chair, she clapped her hands and shouted, "Baby is standing alone—all alone!"

His sister, thinking he could now walk, took him by the hand and with a glad jerk started to give the baby exercise. The next minute he was crying on the floor and Sarah cried too, howling out the words, "Me boke 'is head."

When warm weather came and the cabin door stood open, little Abe crawled down the steps, one day, and into the yard, where his mother was making soft soap in a big, black kettle.

For a time he watched the yellow flames dancing up and down around the iron pot,

and the smoke, like something alive, curling up toward the sky. He did not know what it was, but he knew he could not get it, so he looked about for something else.

Most babies think everything they find is to eat. Little Abe thought this, and having four teeth, he wanted to bite something.

The first thing he tried to eat was a nice, round stone. It was too hard, for though he tried and tried to get his teeth into it, they slipped off every time. Next he tried a leaf, but the leaf was too dry. He then tried a furry caterpillar that rolled up when he caught it off the ground. This tickled his mouth until he spit and threw the funny thing away. His next find was a shiny June bug, which he was getting ready to eat when Sarah saw him and screamed. His mother came running, threw the beetle away and wiped the baby's mouth with the corner of her apron.

When Nancy Lincoln had gone back to the black kettle, baby Abe moved across the yard to a coop around which little chickens ran. A hen inside the coop clucked, ruffled her feathers and pecked on the ground.

For a time little Abe sat very still, watching the hen and her chickens. Then, with a quick motion, he caught a chicken in his small hand.

The chicken peeped and kicked while its

mother in the coop jumped against the slats in her effort to get out. But the baby did not notice the hen. He liked to squeeze the soft little creature in his hand and laughed as its legs kicked.

But pretty soon the chicken stopped peeping and kicking. Little Abe lifted it to his mouth and was about to try its head, when Sarah again screamed. His mother came running this time and, snatching him up, did something to his hands that made them burn, saying, "Bad baby, bad baby!"

This was the first time he had been slapped and the baby yelled lustily. But almost as soon as his mother had hurt his hands she pressed them against her face and made them feel good again.

To the new baby the dooryard was a wonderful place. But there was another wonderful place down by the creek where Nancy Lincoln took baby Abe and Sarah when she went to wash. With the other things she carried to the water hole, Mrs. Lincoln took a gun, which she put in the fork of a tree near by, for there were bears in the woods and other animals and sometimes an unfriendly Indian came that way.

Close by the washing place there was a flat stone with thick green moss growing on it like

a carpet. Behind this rock another had fallen and it too was soft with mossy patches like tiny cushions set together.

When little Abe grew sleepy his mother put him on this clean, comfortable couch and left Sarah to watch that he did not roll off.

At one side of this resting place there was a pool of clear water over which the branches of trees spread like a lacy green roof through which patches of blue sky could be seen.

As he lay on the moss resting one day, little Abe noticed spots of light shining on the water. It was the sunlight shining through the leaves, but he did not know this. All he knew was that the light shining on the clear water at the edge of the gray stone made him think of his mother. She was always gray, for her dresses were of homespun and very plain.

The gray of the stones, the softness of the moss, and the clear light on the water were like his mother. The baby went to sleep and after this the spot always seemed to be another mother, and he came to love it and press his small fingers into the soft moss as he did his mother's hair.

One day after little Abe had learned to walk and talk, he was put to bed with Sarah. When he awoke in the morning there was a new baby in the cradle. It did not remain long,

however, for it was taken from the cradle and carried to the green woods, where it was put away under a small mound over which his mother cried.

Little Abe did not know what all this meant and never wondered, for he soon forgot about the baby that had come and gone in so short a time.

A long while afterward he was told this baby had been a brother, whose name was Thomas.

CHAPTER IV

PLAYDAYS

Not far from the Lincoln cabin, down the slope by the creek, was the spring.

Because the water stood in a great rock bowl, above which was a big, flat rock like a roof, Thomas and Nancy called their spring "Rock Cave-Spring." No telling how many thousands of years this fine spring had been waiting for somebody to come and drink its waters, and though the Lincolns and their children have all gone Rock Cave-Spring remains.

Up on the hillside beyond the spring there was a grove of saplings which were used by Sarah and Abe as horses when they were large enough to ride them. Bending the little trees to the ground, the children climbed on and were ready for a gallop. The stiff trees, the ones that would spring up quickest and highest, were race horses, and as Sarah and little Abe whipped them they pranced up and down, shaking their green manes, while their riders cheered and laughed with the joy of riding.

On the hillside there was also a grape-vine swing so strong both children could enjoy it at the same time, and farther back behind a

great uprooted tree there was a little cave where they played bear, chasing each other on all fours and growling.

But the place they liked the best—the place where they had the happiest times—was at the stream where the water ran away from the spring to the washing hole and then over stones and between mossy tree roots and water grasses to the big creek.

In winter the stream ran full, and after a heavy rain it always seemed to be angry, stewing and boiling and fussing along rudely and in a hurry. But in summer-time it sang and laughed like something very happy, and the children sang and laughed too, as they waded in it and sailed small boats.

Sometimes their boats were of oak leaves loaded with violets, which they played were lovely people going on a long journey. Sometimes the boats were the broad leaves of the hickory. These boats could go over the rough waters, where the stones made ripples better than the oak leaves because of their pointed fronts. So these boats were loaded with grass broken in bits, which was wood going to people who had none.

Here and there along the waterway there were quiet pools in which tadpoles scurried about like fat black beads with bits of black thread for tails.

6 SCHOOLS
0168866

"Watch them," Nancy said to the children. "They will not always be tadpoles in the water."

So the children watched and talked about the tadpoles. "Their tails are shorter today," Sarah said, after examining them as she lay on her stomach with her face close to the water.

"Here's one with something growing out of him," Abe shouted.

A few days later all the tails were gone and the something Abe had noticed growing on the little animal had developed into legs, and the next thing the children knew the damp edge of the pool was alive with the tiniest frogs they had ever seen.

There were minnows in the water also. They always seemed to be hurrying somewhere and it was not often the children could catch one.

Big bottle flies with lacy, silvery wings flew over the surface and dipped into it at times, and spiders with long legs danced in shady corners, while above the water, the pebbly pools, the green tree-horses and the grape-vine swing, stretched the beautiful blue sky.

For the first few years of his life the doorway and the playground at the creek were little Abe's world, and his first visit into the

world beyond was when his mother took him to the store several miles away.*

He seemed very high as he sat with his mother on the horse and saw new scenes along the way. When he reached the store the keeper of it put him on a nail keg and gave him a lump of sugar to eat. It was brown and damp and sweet, and so long as he lived he never forgot this wonderful first visit to the store.

When little Abe got back home, the first thing he did was to tell Sarah about the store with its shelves and boxes and barrels.

"Let's play store," Sarah said. "Down by the water there's nice flat stones to put things on and plenty of sand for sugar."

The next day the store was made, both Abe and Sarah hunting up and down the stream and under the trees for things to put in it.

"Here's the snuff," Sarah said, bringing a dry puffball. "Let's bust it and get the snuff out and watch out or it will fly in your eyes."

When the snuff was in a neat little pile on a stone, little Abe began making cider, for nobody ever heard of a store without a cider barrel. The barrel for this store was a gourd dipper and the cider was pokeberry juice, and Abe made a generous supply of it.

Seeds and berries and acorn cups and bird

* See note 4.

feathers were collected, and when everything else was ready Sarah began gathering small, smooth pebbles to be used as money.

It was while she was collecting this money she found a great treasure—a beautiful snow-white stone with sparkling crystal showing in the middle, and Sarah could not go on with the store until she had taken her treasure to her mother.

“Who made it?” she asked, holding it proudly before Mrs. Lincoln.

“Why, God of course—God makes everything.”

“How did He do it? It’s not gray or brown like all the others.”

“I don’t know how.”

“Doesn’t it tell in the Bible?”

Sarah’s mother laughed. She so often told her children about the Bible, Sarah thought everything one wanted to know must be in it.

“There’s a verse in the Bible about a white stone,” Mrs. Lincoln said. “It says a white stone shall be given to him that overcometh.”

“‘Overcometh.’ What does that mean?”

“When it is easy to do something bad and hard to do something good and you do the good, you have overcome. The Book says there’s a new name written in the white stone.”

“I found the stone. What will my new name be?”

"I do not know, little Sarah. I think the new name the Bible tells about is the name we will have when we have overcome in this world and gone to heaven. Perhaps the angels know something about our new names but I do not."

While Sarah was questioning her mother, Abe was planning a surprise for her.

He and Sarah had been talking about God because Sarah had said God made everything that was going in their store, God made everything that ever had been made or ever would be made.

Abe believed what Sarah said, for his mother had said it first and he never questioned what his mother said. Still he thought he would make something he had never known God to make anything like, just to puzzle Sarah.

So he took his gourd of poke juice to the shed where Topknot, the white hen, stayed, caught her and painted her from beak to tail until she was as pink as a rose except her topknot, on which he squeezed grass juice to make it green. A strange and gorgeous bird was Topknot, as gay-feathered as a tropical parrot.

When Sarah came out of the cabin he called her, and displaying the gaudy hen, said, "Did God made this bird or didn't He?"

“Abe Lincoln!” Sarah exclaimed when she could speak. “What have you done to Topknot?”

“Isn’t she pretty?” he asked, keeping hold of her leg and rubbing her red feathers.

“Yes, she’s pretty. She’s *too* pretty. If she sees herself she’ll not know she’s a common hen and she’ll be too proud to ever lay another egg. If God had wanted hens red, He would have made them red and I don’t think it’s right for you to play God.”

“Who’s playing God?” Mrs. Lincoln, who had just come out, asked.

“Abe’s been playing God,” Sarah answered promptly. “Look how he’s fixed Topknot.”

“My goodness!” Mrs. Lincoln exclaimed as she caught sight of the gorgeous hen. Then she caught Abe by the arm and turning him around said, “Look at me, Abe Lincoln. I let you play everything anybody ever heard of and a lot of things nobody ever heard of. But it’s a sin to ‘play God.’ You go now to the nearest tree and get me a good switch. You’ve got to be taught some sense and some religion.”

Dropping the red hen, little Abe lifted his eyes and looked about.

“The nearest tree?” he questioned.

“Yes, the *very nearest* tree. Hurry up.”

The nearest tree happened to be a scraggy,

thorny locust growing at the corner of the cow shed. With some difficulty Abe broke off a branch.

When he gave it to his mother she said, "Now Abe, you know I can't switch you with this. These thorns would go clean through your skinny little legs."

"I'll cut them off," Abe said meekly but with a ray of hope.

"All right. Sit yourself down by the wood-pile and don't you move a foot away until you get that switch fixed. Sarah will bring you a knife.

Seeing Abe seated by the wood-pile, Mrs. Lincoln went into the house to prepare supper. Sarah brought the knife and then stood by to watch her brother trim the rod.

"You cut awful slow," Sarah said after watching a few moments.

"Yes, but these here thorns are tough."

"How tough?"

"Powerful tough."

"If they're tough *enough*," Sarah said thoughtfully, "she may forget."

"You ain't no fool," Abe said, smiling at his sister. "They're every bit of *that* tough."

CHAPTER V

BACK UP, BIG CAT!"

BEFORE little Abe was six years old his father bought some land on Knob Creek and moved from the cabin in which the children had been born to another, little better. The new land, however, seemed more inviting for farming and Thomas Lincoln said he was going to settle down, work the soil, and make a good home.

Mrs. Lincoln would have felt sad about leaving her first home if the family had not been so very poor there. But because her husband never stayed home long enough to cut the forests and make fields so the corn and potatoes and vegetables could grow they lived mostly on corn bread and meat. Mr. Lincoln caught plenty of fish and killed a great deal of game. He traded pelts for corn to make their meal, but they could never buy much at the store for they never had money, and Mrs. Lincoln went without many things she needed. She hoped it would be better in the new home.

Sarah and little Abe loved their playing place by Cave Spring and hated to leave it.

Still they were not wholly sorry to leave, for there were other children near where they would live and they thought it must be fine to have playmates.

One of the first children who came to see the Lincolns in their new home was a boy named Austin Gollaher. He was older than Abe and at first the small Lincoln boy would not speak to him.

"Howdy," said Austin.

Little Abe just stared at him.

"If you'll come with me I'll show you where 'Old Skinny' killed a fox. That's my dog. The bones are there yet. We got the hide."

Still little Abe only stared at the strange boy.

"And there's lots of places to go. The best is Hodgen's Mill. That's the place everybody takes their corn. It's made into meal there."

"How?" Little Abe was at last interested enough to speak.

"Water runs over a great big wheel outside the mill. It goes around this way," and Austin made sweeping circles with his arms. "The stone inside goes this way," and another circle was described by the boy's arms, this time with his hand pointing to the ground. "The corn goes in a place called a hopper

and comes out meal. Want to go with me to see it?"

"When?"

"Next time I go."

"Yep."

"How'd you like to have a whistle like this?" and Austin took a piece of cane out of his pocket and gave a shrill call on it. "Come on and I'll make you one. Here, you can blow mine 'til I get yours made, but don't blow spit in it," and he held the whistle to the new little boy.

Abe took it, whistled and then went with Austin to the woods, and this was the way they made their acquaintance.

Abe never forgot his first visit to Hodgen's Mill. It was a long walk through the woods, and from the time he started he kept looking through the leaves for a first sight of the mill. But it was his ears that told him when they were nearing it, for he heard the plash of the water falling over the big wheel before he could see it.

To the little boy who had never been anywhere or seen anything, this mill was most wonderful and Abe thought the miller must be the greatest man in the world to know how to run the machinery that ground the corn.

The miller was a large man. His face and

arms and hair were dusty and it was hard to tell what kind of clothes he wore, so much dust had settled on him.

But the dusty face wore a smile and the big man showed the small boy how the wheel turned, where the corn went in and the meal came out, and took him so close to the water wheel the spray spattered them both.

Next to the miller little Abe thought the miller's mother was the nicest person he had ever met. She was not little like his own mother and her eyes were not gray. She was tall with brown eyes. Her hair had silver streaks in it and curled back from her nice face. When this lady looked into the eyes of little Abe he knew at once that he would like her; there was something so kind in their expression.

Little Abe was not a handsome child. His face was narrow, his nose was large and his ears were oversize and stood out from his head, while his hair was coarse and dark. His body was thin, with long legs and arms and fingers. He did not know he was a homely child for he had never seen himself in any other mirror than a pool of water, and he never stopped then to look long at his own face. It did not interest him much.

Neither did his clothing trouble him be-

cause of its kind. In the fall Abe's mother made him a pair of buckskin breeches which reached nearly to his ankles. His shirt had a very long tail, which was all the undergarment he wore. His coat was of deerskin and his cap was of coonskin with a tail on top for an ornament and pieces to pull down over his ears when the weather was very cold. His shoes were moccasins.

In the summer the moccasins and cap were put away until cold weather should come back and a pair of homespun breeches took the place of the buckskin. So the question of dress was a simple one, though the job of making winter clothes was one Mrs. Lincoln did not like.

While Abe was yet very small his father said it was time for him to learn to work. He had always helped his mother carry water from the spring and wood from the forest. But at the new place Mr. Lincoln said Abe must learn to chop trees, dig out roots, make fence-posts, split rails, and do all kinds of work.

It was rather hard on a small boy to do so much work and when Mr. Lincoln went away for several days Mrs. Lincoln always let Abe go to visit the miller and his mother, who had taken a great liking to the little boy and wanted him to come often to see them.

“I believe,” said the miller to his mother one day after Abe had been there, “that’s the hungriest looking little fellow I ever saw. I wonder if he don’t get enough to eat.”

“It’s not bread and meat he’s hungry for,” the miller’s mother said. “It’s stories. You should have seen him when I told him the story of Robinson Crusoe. And when I told him about George Washington, his plain face lit up with real smiles. He’s an unusual child and ought to have some schooling. In fact there are several children in the neighborhood that should learn to read and count and write. We ought to have a school.”

When Abe became well enough acquainted with the miller’s mother he asked her many questions, some of which she found difficult to answer. One day when the miller had been talking to his mother about buying a slave to help around the mill, Abe, who did not know much about slaves, asked about them.

She told him slaves were black people with wool on their heads, flat noses and thick lips, and white people owned them just as they did dogs and cows and mules, and made them work.

“Where do the white folks get them?” Abe asked.

“Buy them unless they have some already. When people own old slaves they have little

ones just as cows have calves and these grow up into big slaves."

"Where did the first white folks get the first black ones, ketch 'em somewheres?"

"Yes, in Africa."

"If there was more black folks than white and the blacks had ketched us first, we'd been the slaves, wouldn't we?"

"I never heard such a strange question," the miller's mother said, "nobody could ever imagine such a thing."

After the Lincolns had lived near Hodgen's Mill for some time, a school-teacher came and opened a school in a cabin not far from the miller's home.*

Austin Gollaher told Abe about it and said he was going. Abe was afraid his father would not want him to go and he was not mistaken. When the matter was mentioned to him by Mrs. Lincoln he said, "Abe don't need to waste no time on larnin'. He's lazy as a white dog now and he won't never be no 'count if he gets started on larnin'."

"But Thomas," Mrs. Lincoln said, "you know I have to count your pelts and figure out how much money you ought to get for them every time you sell more than a dozen. That's because you never went to school. And if I didn't do your figgerin' for you, you'd

* See note 5.

get your eyes cheated out at market. *Somebody* has to know how to count and write it down. Maybe when Abe gets big he won't have a woman that can count for him like you got. You better let him learn to do it for himself.”

“Maybe you're talkin' sense. Anyway I'll let Abe go to school till he learns to count one hundred. There ain't nobody nowhere needs to know how to count more.”

So Abe went to school bareheaded, barefooted, and without a book of any kind or any slate or pencil or paper. Sometimes he made his letters on the smooth ground where the boys had played marbles. Sometimes he skinned the bark off a tree and wrote on the clean wood with pokeberry ink, which made beautiful crimson letters.

The way to school was a long one, a portion of it through the deep woods. But Abe and Sarah, who went with him, were never afraid, and danger never threatened them, so far as they knew, but one time.

This was on a day when they were nearing home and had come upon a patch of wild strawberries growing in the sun at the edge of the woods. Here, under the green leaves, there were whole handfuls of rich, red berries hanging on their slender stems.

Sarah clapped her hands with joy, shouting, "I'll get some for mommy."

"Don't stop long," Abe said. "The sun's behind the timber and it'll be getting dark pretty soon."

"I'll hurry," and the next minute Sarah was on her hands and knees picking berries, and pouring them into her dinner pail and thinking how pleased her mother would be with such a good supper brought in.

So interested was Sarah in gathering the berries she never thought to look up. If she had, she would have seen, slowly creeping out on a tree branch over her head, an enormous cat with sharp ears and long, stiff whiskers. Very quietly it moved, nearer and nearer the child crouched in the berry vines, without making the least bit of noise.

Having grown tired of waiting, little Abe, who had walked on, turned back. When he came near the tree under which Sarah picked berries he lifted his eyes to meet the shining eyes of the big cat.

Quietly, just as quietly as the cat had come up, the little boy moved where he could look into the animal's face. At first the wildcat did not see him. Then, without moving its body, it turned its yellow eyes toward him.

When the cat's eyes met the eyes of the

boy, its tail, which had been moving slowly like a lazy snake, stopped. Abe stepped a little closer, never taking his eyes from those of the cat.

"Back up, big cat," he said quietly.

Abe stepped a little closer, still keeping his eyes on the cat, and as he moved the cat, too, moved, but backward, until it dropped suddenly into a thicket and disappeared.

Hearing the noise of the body in the leaves, Sarah sprang up, looking around.

"It's gone now," Abe said. "A big cat was up just above you with his claws all sharpened to grab into your back. I gave him to understand I was waiting for him and the minute he dropped I'd be on him to choke his tongue out. So he backed up. Cats have sense if they are wild. Let's go," and, taking his sister by the hand, the two children ran home as fast as they could.

Mrs. Lincoln was frightened when she heard about the wildcat so near Sarah, but Thomas Lincoln was more interested than afraid.

"It was because Abe showed no fear the cat backed up like he told it to. I've heard of hunters standing off panthers that way. But the next cat might not be so obliging and Abe must carry something better to fight with than his claws."

So Abe's father got him a sharp little

hatchet with a good hickory handle. His mother made him a deerskin belt with a place to hold the hatchet, and when he went through the lonely woods after that he had something with which to defend himself should he meet a beast which came toward him instead of backing up.

CHAPTER VI

HOW GOD TALKS

IN THE time and country where little Abe Lincoln lived, there were no churches, and religious services were held by travelling preachers at camp-meetings.

Most of these meetings were held in the summer-time, when it was pleasant to travel long distances and live out of doors under trees and in tents.

For the big meetings an arbor was made of trees and covered with branches. Logs were split into boards to make seats and a tall pulpit was built for the preacher to stand in. For light at the night meetings, pine knots were burned on heaps of fresh earth, and after the preaching and the singing, the people got happy and danced in the firelight until they fell to the ground.

The first time little Abe went to one of these big camp-meetings he went on horseback with his mother while Sarah rode with her father on his horse.

As they had many miles to go, the Lincolns started before sunset. It would be moonlight later, but as twilight fell over the earth and the horses went into the woods, the trees

never before seemed so big and dark and solemn to the two children.

Sometimes the forest was very quiet. Then the stillness would be broken by the screech of an owl and Sarah would lean close to her father and shiver with fear. Once Thomas Lincoln's horse was badly frightened by a bear which galloped across the roadway just before him.

"Hold tight!" Mr. Lincoln shouted to Sarah as the horse dashed forward, and they stayed on his back.

Clearing the first woods, the travellers found themselves in the moonlight and Sarah was not frightened when a whole chorus of frogs suddenly started their croaking song and another owl cried "Whoo! Whoo!"

So they took their way through the deep woods, up one hill and down another, and across streams. Abe enjoyed crossing the creeks more than any part of the journey, for the water splashed up by the horses looked like silver spangles dancing for a moment in the moonlight and he liked the sound of the water falling back against the surface of the stream.

As they rounded the last bit of hill road, singing was heard.

"It's in the next valley," Thomas Lincoln said, and they all looked eagerly forward for

the first sign of the big meeting, which sign was the pine fires glowing like big, bright eyes out of the darkness

Abe and Sarah were greatly excited and could hardly wait until they should reach the wonderful place.

As they drew near the arbor the outlines of horses could be seen in the moonlight. They were hitched everywhere, it seemed to the children, who did not know there were so many horses in the whole country.

But when they saw the people in the big arbor they forgot the great array of horses, for there were so many rows and rows of men and women the children knew they could not even count the seats.

"Must be all the people in the whole world are here," Sarah whispered to Abe.

"I reckon a *few* stayed home," he answered. And then they walked up the aisle silent and awe-struck.

Thomas Lincoln found a place for himself and Sarah and Abe to sit and Mrs. Lincoln sat in front of them. Services were just beginning and the preacher in the tall pulpit was telling the people they must hear what he said for he was going to speak the "word of God."

In long ago days preachers thought if they told people about a horrible fiery place called "hell" where bad people went, they would be

so frightened they would be good. The king of this fiery hell was called the Devil and he was always trying to get people away from God's heaven into his terrible place.

This was the preacher's subject the night the Lincolns heard him. Abe looked and listened. The man in the pulpit was not kind-faced and quiet like the miller he so much liked. He started out shouting at the people and moving about. The more he preached the louder he shouted and the more he moved until he was jumping up and down and pounding the pulpit with his fist. Abe wondered why he did this. He had never seen the miller pound his grinding stone.

After keeping his eyes on the man in the pulpit for some time Abe looked around at the people. The preacher had just been telling them the Devil was going about like a roaring lion "seeking whom he might devour" and in the yellow light of the pine torches, Abe saw many faces pitifully marked with fear.

Sarah had not listened long before she too was greatly frightened.

Drawing close beside her father, she leaned against him and half sobbed, "I don't want him to get me."

"You set up and keep still," Thomas Lincoln answered. "The Devil's only after sinners."

Sarah did not think she was a sinner but she was not sure. She wished she were sitting beside her mother so she could cuddle close to her and hang on to the stout, gray dress.

She did not dare move however, so she caught hold of her brother's hand. When he felt her trembling he said, "What you skeered of, Sarah?"

"I'm afraid the Devil's going to get us—he's everywhere—like a roaring lion—right here—I'm skeered!"

"Tain't no Devil like a roaring lion anywhere in these parts," Abe answered. "Look how still the horses is standing. Reckon they wouldn't be standing on their hind legs and pawing the air and bellering if they smelled a lion? That man's jumped hisself out of wind and don't know what he's talking about. Maybe he'll forget the Devil after a while and tell us something about God."

Little Abe was right about the preacher's being out of wind. He soon stopped for a rest and the singing began. Thomas Lincoln and Nancy sang and even Sarah and Abe joined in, so that in a little while Sarah was not afraid any more.

After the singing, came the shouting and dancing. Thomas and Nancy stayed as long as they could but had to leave before the meeting closed as they had so far to go.

"I don't like that man," Abe said to his mother on the way home. "He tells lies."

"Abe! Abe!" Mrs. Lincoln exclaimed. "What an awful thing to say of a servant of God!"

"But he *does* tell lies," Abe insisted. "He said the Devil was prowling around like a roaring lion. I got ears—my ears is bigger than most ears. I can hear good and I didn't hear no lion roaring nor nobody else did or they wouldn't have set still."

"You don't understand. The Devil doesn't roar so you can hear him. You *really* can't hear him roar."

"You really can't see him neither, can you?"

"No."

"And he hasn't got no smell to him either. Horses can smell varmints and critters a long way off. They got good noses and so has dogs. There wasn't no lion at that meeting and that man said what he was saying was 'God's word.' How does he know what's God's word anyhow? Does God talk to him?"

"God talks to everybody who wants to hear Him," Mrs. Lincoln answered. "He talks through the Bible and the songs of birds and the beautiful colors of the sky. He talks through the wonderful ways of animals and through the love mothers have for their children."

"Does the Bible say God talks to people?"

"Yes, if they can understand. Thomas," she called to Mr. Lincoln, who was riding in front, "slow up a minute. I want to teach Abe a Bible verse about the way God talks."

The horses were stopped.

"Look up, Abe," his mother said. "Lift your eyes to the sky."

"It's purple as a ripe blueberry," Abe said, "and spattered with stars that jump like fireflies only they never get anywhere."

"They've been there ever since the world was made. There's a lot in the Bible about stars and the sun too. We couldn't live without the sun. Nobody knows how many stars there are, nor much about them except they're there and burn like specks off the sun. The verse I want to teach you is one telling about just what you're looking at now. Hear it Abe, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.' What we see is *God's handiwork* and the heavens declare His glory. You're too little to understand what the preacher said. But you're not too little to know how God talks. And whenever you get all mixed up about what somebody says, get off by yourself and look into God's wonderful heaven and say this verse. If you do this you'll never forget how God talks."

CHAPTER VII

TREE TOADS

THE land Thomas Lincoln bought on Knob Creek lay on the sides of three hills that sloped down to the water. There were many other hills up and down the creek and when a heavy rain came, Knob soon changed from a gentle-mannered, low-singing stream to a rude, rushing, roaring giant, carrying trees down-stream and boiling along like something gone mad.

Across this stream lay a big log which served as a bridge. When the creek was low Sarah and Abe played on the log, sometimes hanging to it with their arms and dangling their feet in the clear water. Sometimes they jumped off it and shouted as the water splashed about them. They even stretched themselves on the fine old log and played going to sleep.

But when the water was running high the foot log was no safe place for the children to play and Mrs. Lincoln had told them never to cross the stream when it was flooded.

Abe intended to mind and did until a day when Austin Gollaher came with his mother to make a visit. Knob Creek was running high

in its banks and neither of the boys thought of crossing it until the dogs started a covey of quail.

After a brief chase the birds flew across the creek. Bent on getting hold of a "bob-white" and thinking only of the bird, Abe ran to the foot log and started across.

The water was running so close beneath it the spray had wet the log. Still Abe did not stop to think, but ran ahead until he had nearly reached the middle of the stream, when his foot turned on the wet log and into the muddy, rushing water he fell.

A moment later his black head came above the dirty, swirling flood not a great distance from the bank and with all his might he shouted, "Help! Don't let me drown!"

His playfellow, Austin, who had not tried to cross, acted quickly.* Close at hand was a long, strong, forked sycamore limb. This the boy pushed into the water, letting it wash against a small tree, which held it so that the water could not carry it away.

"Catch hold! I'll not let it get loose! Got it? Hold! Hold!"

Abe had caught the end of the branch in his strong little hands and needed no command from Austin to hold to it.

A few moments later Abe was out of the

* See note 6.

water and stood dripping on the bank. Austin also was wet, having slipped into the edge of the water as he pulled Abe out.

"What'll we do?" Austin asked, his eyes on his dripping garments. "If we go to the house we'll get skinned alive. Didn't your pa and ma tell you not to go over the creek when she's up?"

"Yep."

"Does your pappy skin hard?"

"You ought to see him once."

"So does mine. Let's go down the creek to an open place where the sun shines hot and dry our clothes. We get enough skinning that can't be helped."

"But you didn't try to cross the log. You ought not to be whipped."

"I got wet, didn't I? My pap wouldn't listen to my tale if he caught me wet. Let's dry our clothes and keep a secret."

So the boys hurried down the creek to a sunny open place where they spread their clothing on the bushes. They were now naked but could not go swimming and the question was, what could they play?

"The covering what makes us look like humans instead of some other kind of critters is spread on the bushes. Let's be some sort of animals," Abe said.

"What sort?"

"Some kind what lives in a tree. I want to get into the top of a tree under the leaves till my breeches get dry."

"Wildcats live in trees," Austin said.

"I don't want to be a wildcat. I saw one catch a rabbit once. He got his whiskers bloody, and his paws. I hate wildcats."

"Hawks live in trees."

"Can't you think of something beside bloody beasts? The last hawk I saw had blood on his gray front. I hope it was some mean fighting bird he killed."

"Snakes live in trees. They don't eat bloody."

"They swallow things whole—birds and eggs and frogs. Down by the spring I heard a frog hollering. When I found him his hind legs was already down the snake's throat."

"Did you get him out?"

"Yep, nearly choked the snake to death."

"If he'd swallowed the frog head first he wouldn't have lost his dinner."

"Reckon he grabbed him going instead of coming, but I'm not going to be any snake. I'd rather be a woodpecker."

"Their nests smell too bad for me. Squirrels have clean nests and they live in trees."

"Yep, they live in trees but they haven't got any too much sense. They keep their tails sticking up for everybody to see and get

shot at. We got to be some kind of an animal that can keep itself hid till our breeches get dry. I think I'll be a tree toad. He's a nice, decent little critter and squats so close on the tree nobody can find him."

"I don't like his kind of a song," Austin said.

"He don't sing in the daytime and we'll be dried and gone 'fore night comes."

"All right, if there's nothing else suits you, let's be tree toads."

So the two naked boys climbed into the top of the tree and made themselves as comfortable as they could on a couple of limbs, and it was here they had most of their visit.

"Did the miller's mother ever read to you about George Washington?" Abe asked Austin.

"No. Who was he?"

"The father of his country."

"What did he do?"

"Crossed the Delaware."

"What's that?"

"A river. I saw a picture of it, all full of ice."

"What did he cross in the ice for?"

"He was on his way to fight the folks that wouldn't let us have a country of our own to live in."

"Gee! Did he beat them up good?"

“I don’t know. She only told me a little, but I reckon the book about George Washington is next best to the Bible and I hope I can learn to read one sometime.”

“Read? What does a tree toad want to learn to read for?” And Austin laughed until he nearly fell out of the tree.

CHAPTER VIII

NO TRAPPER

LITTLE ABE thought that, next to the miller, his father must be the greatest man in the world. Surely there could not be a better hunter and trapper. All the sights and sounds of the woods and streams were known to Thomas Lincoln. He knew the difference between the bark of the gray fox, the red fox and all the different kinds of wolves. He knew fur signs of the muskrat and the mink. He could read tracks and showed little Abe how.

In the moist earth at the water's edge a coon's track looked like the pat of a baby's hand. If the toes spread apart, making the track more like a star, a 'possum had made it. If it was a long, padded print and rounded at the heel with claws in front, it was a skunk. A muskrat's trail was like that of a frog only where the tail marked the wet mud.

Walking the woods and following the streams did not seem as much like work as clearing land and building fences, and if it had not been for hurting and killing the fur-bearing animals, Abe thought he would like to be a real trapper. He was still wondering if the time would come when he could kill and

skin an animal without feeling he had done a sin, when a real trapper visited the Lincolns.

He was a stranger who had been to Louisville with a raft of pelts and was on his way back to the West. Thomas Lincoln met him at the store and brought him home with him to sit by the fire and tell about trapping on great waterways and hunting in big forests Lincoln had never seen.

Little Abe listened with ears and eyes wide open as the visitor told about buffaloes and Indians; of a visit to a little mud hole called Chicago and his experiences at a French trading post on the Mississippi River called St. Louis.

The trapper, who had sold a great many furs, owned some land in Kentucky, and after he had sold furs from a couple more trips West, he intended quitting the hard and dangerous life of the trapper, buying some slaves to work his land and taking his ease the rest of his life.

This statement brought up some talk about slaves. Thomas Lincoln said slaves must be a great deal of trouble and eat a great deal.

"Yes, they eat," the trapper said, laughing. "So do dogs eat, yet everybody has dogs."

"But slaves run away."

“So do dogs and cows and mules and hogs.”

“But slaves have sense enough not to be chased back like cows. They can keep going.”

“Not very far with good hounds on their track. Ever go on a slave-hunt? I did once down in Louisiana. It’s more exciting than any other kind of a hunt. A good blood-hound never loses scent on dry land, and hounds’ teeth are not easily shaken off once they get hold.”

“How do they know just how hard to hold on without tearing up the black?” Mr. Lincoln asked.

“They don’t always.”

Little Abe had been so interested in what the trapper had said he had not looked closely at him. He knew his hands were blunt and strong and covered with red hair which went up his arms as far as could be seen. Abe had noticed this because the firelight fell across the man’s hands. Now Abe took a careful look at the trapper’s face.

It was partly in the shadow, yet he thought the eyes were like those of a fox and the teeth like those of a wolf. When he noticed the keen and powerful knife in the thick belt, just for a moment it seemed to Abe he could see this man chasing small animals and deer and slaves, his keen knife in his hand.

"How many pelts make a raftful?" Abe asked when he had a chance to speak.

"Thousands of them."

"You must have left an awful heap of little animals without any hide on."

The trapper laughed and said, "Yes, sonny, but think of the money they bring, the whisky they pay for, and the slaves they will buy."

"Better to let them live than to kill them for such things as whisky and——"

Little Abe never finished his speech.

"Can't you never learn to tend your own business!" his father exclaimed angrily, and with the words he slapped Abe off his stool onto the floor.*

Abe crawled away in silence. The trapper watched the boy. He saw tears drop on the thin cheeks and long, slender fingers hurriedly wipe them away. He noticed that there was no crying and a moment later no sign of the punishment in the boy's face.

"That there boy'll make a famous good trapper some day," the visitor said. "He don't let his feelings get the best of him."

"Feelings!" Thomas Lincoln exclaimed. "You don't know him. Trapper? He'll never be no trapper. He's let everything he ever caught go free. The worst beating I was ever called on to give him was the time he took a

* See note 7.

bear cub * out of a trap and let it go. For weeks I'd been trying to get the old bear, but she was too smart. Then the cub sprang the trap and I'd been sure to get the big one if Abe had tended his business."

As Abe's father told the trapper the story, a smile came over the thin little face that had been sad with humiliation and pain.

Again Abe could see the roly-poly baby bear as plainly as he saw it on the day he set it free. He had found it with its paw fast in the trap. It was crying and when it saw him coming it cried more, not as if it were afraid of him, but as if it asked for help.

Just the other side of the trap there were big bear tracks, quite likely made by the mother, who had come to see what kept her little one. Perhaps she was hiding somewhere near.

Abe looked about carefully. He wanted to help the baby bear, but he had no wish to be caught by a big, angry mother bear.

The baby kept looking at him and begging for help. Abe went a little closer and a little closer, watching all the time to see if anything moved in the underbrush. Slowly he reached the trapped animal, which had stopped crying and was waiting to see what would happen.

* See note 8.

When Abe was close enough he rubbed the soft fur on the cub's back. Then he reached down to the trap and after hard pressure released the spring and pulled the bruised foot out.

Without so much as looking at the boy, the bear made for the thicket, while Abe stood by and watched the little bundle of fur hurry away as fast as it was able in the direction which the big tracks took.

Two beatings such as his father had given him would not have been too much to pay for the joy of giving the baby bear its freedom.

But just now Abe did not say anything. His face was yet burning from the effects of talking too much. Still he was glad he had seen a real, live western trapper, for now he was sure he would never be one.

CHAPTER IX

“GOOD-BY KENTUCKY”*

WHEN Thomas and Nancy Lincoln had been living on their land near Knob Creek some time, several of their acquaintances went to the Territory of Indiana. They called it “Indianny,” and after they had been gone some time they sent word back to their friends in Kentucky that Indiana was a wonderful place. The land was not poor like that around Knob Creek and it was flat.

Thomas Lincoln thought he would like to own some flat land, as he had not been able to raise much on his hills. Once after little Abe had planted a whole hillside field with pumpkin seeds there came a big rain which washed all the pumpkin seeds and part of the dirt in which they were planted into Knob Creek.

After thinking the matter over, Thomas Lincoln decided he, too, would go to Indiana. Mrs. Lincoln did not want to go any farther into the wild West. She was already a long way from her family and friends and, too, she was afraid there would never be any school in that wild country for Sarah and Abe to

* See note 9.

attend. Still she wanted to do what was best and perhaps the new home would be better than the old, and life would not be so hard for her.

To the children the trip promised to be the greatest of their lives. They would be days and days on the journey, camping along the way. They would also cross the Beautiful River, as the Ohio was then called. This river was longer and wider than all the creeks and streams they had ever seen. The tallest horse could not wade across it. People built rafts and took their horses and wagons and cows and pigs across the wide water this way.

Thomas Lincoln sold his little farm for twenty dollars in money and twenty barrels of whiskey, which was as good as money to exchange for food, clothing, cows or anything one needed to buy.

Down by the creek Mr. Lincoln built a raft, on which he loaded his whiskey and tools, and when all was ready he started away to find a place for the new home.

His raft got along very well on the creek, but when he reached the big river it tipped over and his whiskey barrels slid into the water.

After much hard labor he recovered most of them and finally reached the Indiana side of the river. Here he stored his whiskey in a

safe place and set out into the trackless forest to find the rich new land which he intended to make into a home.

There were few roads and few people in Indiana, and neither roads nor people where he was going. Reaching the land that could be his, he staked out his claim by piling brush on the four corners and then went back to Kentucky to move his family.

When the children found they were really going on the long journey to the strange, new land, they were quite excited, though they were sorry to leave their friends. Abe was really sad when he thought of leaving the miller. By this time he had decided to be a miller himself, and when he said good-by to the miller he told him he would return some day to work in that very mill. If he did not come when he was little, he promised he would surely come when he had grown to be a man.

In addition to the family, the cow was going to Indiana. So was the pet pig and a number of pigs that were not pets. Only two dogs were going on the journey, and Abe had to give his old dog to Austin, who promised he would take good care of it till the day of its death.

Topknot, the white hen, and two sister hens and a rooster were also to be of the party, and Abe made a coop for the chickens

which was to hang on the back end of the wagon.

Sarah had her precious white stone put in the barrel with the pots and pans, but her father, in looking for a place to put a tool, found the stone and threw it out.

In great trouble Sarah went to Abe.

"He's thrown away the finest thing we've got," she exclaimed, beginning to cry.

"What?" questioned Abe.

"The beautiful white stone I found at our first playing place."

"It's nothing but a stone," Abe said.

"Nothing but a stone? Well, if it's the only one like it in the whole world isn't that something? Ever since I found it I've been hunting for another and there's not any more. That's because this stone is the one it tells about in the Bible."

"What kind is that?"

"The overcoming stone with a new name written on the inside of it?"

"'Overcoming'—what's that?"

"When you want to do something bad and don't do it, that's 'overcoming,' and you'll get to heaven after you die and have a new name—the one that's on the inside of the white stone."

"Is that in the Bible?"

"Yes it is, mother said so."

“Then we’ve got to find a place for it. Let’s see. How would the corner of the chicken coop do? It’s a good strong coop and the white stone won’t bother anything.”

“It’ll get dirty.”

“If it’s the right kind of a stone it’ll come clean in the wash.”

So it was arranged that the white stone should ride to Indiana with the chickens and Sarah was very happy.

The day before they were to leave, Mrs. Lincoln went with little Abe and Sarah back for a last look at the tiny cabin home where the mother had come as a bride and where the children had been born.

And there was something else she wanted to see before she went to the far new country. It was the tiny grave where baby Thomas, who lived so short a time, had been put to rest.

So long as she lived near it Nancy Lincoln went often to put vines and flowers on the little mound. But it was fall now and the only flowers she could find were some late goldenrod and purple asters. With leaves and flowers she covered the spot which she knelt beside. Her lips moved as if in prayer and her eyes filled with tears. The children looked on and wondered why she cried over so small a grave.

There was something Abe wanted to see

before he went away, perhaps forever. It was the mossy gray stone by the clear water, the place that had always made him think of his mother. He stood a long time looking at it. Brown leaves were scattered over the moss and floated on the water now. He put his hand on the stone, but it was not warm as when his little body had rested on it long ago, and something seemed to hurt his heart because it was cold and he would not see it when it was warm and soft again.

When the Lincolns were ready to start, their friends gathered to see them off. After the last good-by had been said and the last "God bless you," those who stayed behind watched the wagon in which Mrs. Lincoln sat on a pile of bedding, and Mr. Lincoln, with the children, who walked behind the cow and pigs, until they were out of sight.

"It's good-by Kentuck fer tham," Mr. Gollaher said, and Austin put his face against the side of Abe's old dog to hide his tears,

CHAPTER X

THE NEW HOME

IT WAS ninety miles from the Lincolns' home in Kentucky to the place where the new home was to be, and Mrs. Lincoln was in a hurry to have the journey over, build the new cabin and get plenty of wood cut, for she knew cold weather would be coming soon. She had never forgotten the terrible storm, the intense cold, and her own suffering on the night little Abe was born, and every winter of the seven that had passed since then she had grown more afraid of the cold.

The journey was made without any sickness or accident and was much enjoyed by the children. An hour before dark the travelers stopped each day to get ready for night. Abe and his father collected plenty of wood. The horses were tied near to graze, and corn was sprinkled about so the pigs would stay around.

Almost every day Mr. Lincoln shot some kind of game, and meat never tasted so good as when roasted over the hot coals and eaten with corn pone baked in the iron skillet.

After supper Abe and Mr. Lincoln lay by

the fire which burned all night to keep beasts away, while Mrs. Lincoln and Sarah had a comfortable bed in the wagon.

The second day of the journey Mr. Lincoln stopped where there was already plenty of wood, so Abe had time for a short walk with Sarah in the woods near by. To their joy they found a muscadine vine hanging black with fruit. They shook it and the marble-like grapes fell in a shower, making the dead leaves on the ground rattle.

Before they had gathered any of the fruit, however, they saw yellow-jackets swarming from the leaves. Somewhere close by there was a nest and the disturbed insects were coming out in force to see what was bombarding their place.

When Sarah and Abe saw the angry things buzzing from the leaves they ran as fast as their legs would carry them back to the camp. But the pigs, which were rooting for acorns near by, not knowing about yellow-jackets, kept on in their search until the yellow-jackets, seeing nothing else to go after, flew onto them.

Such a squealing and snorting and dancing about pigs never did before, until with a jump and last squeal they took to the dim trail and, racing madly, were soon out of sight.

Nobody could go after the distracted pigs,

but the Lincolns learned afterward that the animals made good time back to the Ohio River, swam it and returned to their old Kentucky home, where no yellow-jackets ever bothered them.

On the land Thomas Lincoln had selected for the new home trees grew so thick it was necessary to cut a roadway for the horses and wagon to pass through. There were walnut and beech, oak, elm, and maple, with an undergrowth of sumac, dogwood, and grapevines.

It was from the big trees lumber was to be made for the new house, the cow shed, the pigpen, the fences, the firewood, and the furniture for the cabin.

The building of the house came first, and never was a shelter built in a greater hurry. Geese were beginning to fly south, which meant cold weather, and the woods were full of wild animals.

Thomas Lincoln did not have many tools, but he could use what few he possessed with skill. So trees were chopped down and the bark scraped off. These first timbers made the corner posts of the cabin, which was to be what was called a "half-face camp." This meant the new home was not to have any front. Deerskins would be hung up instead of a wall and door.

When the corner trees were in place other logs were put across to make walls. A stick and dirt chimney was built, but there was no floor except earth, because it took time to change trees into floor blocks, and Mr. Lincoln and Abe had to use the time covering the cabin.

The roof was made of hand-split shingles, and though it looked rough it would keep out the rain and snow, for Thomas Lincoln knew how to make splendid shingles.

In this cabin there was a tiny loft where Abe was to sleep. His bed was leaves with a deerskin over them. When he went to bed at night he climbed up the side of the wall on wooden pegs as boys climb trees, and it was just as much fun. And when he reached the loft he had to crawl to his bed, the roof was so low.

The downstairs bed was made with saplings for bedposts and slats. A flat straw tick was placed on this rough bed and Nancy spread her quilts on it. There was only one chair—the one Thomas had made for his wife in their first cabin. But he made some three-legged stools, which were fine to sit on around the fire. He also made a big wooden shovel, large enough to carry ashes from the fireplace into the yard.

This cabin was not as good a one as either

of the cabins Nancy had lived in in Kentucky, but they were all so tired after the long journey and the nights were getting so cold, Mrs. Lincoln was glad to have any kind of a place to stay in. The fireplace was big, there was plenty of wood, and Thomas promised Nancy he would put a front on the cabin and daub the cracks with mud as soon as he found time, and this was something pleasant to look forward to.

Before they went to bed the first night they stayed in their new wilderness home, Mrs. Lincoln brought out the Bible, and while they sat around the blazing fire she read about the children of Israel going to the Promised Land and Mr. Lincoln prayed, thanking God they were safe after their journey.

When they were ready to go to bed Abe climbed up the peg ladder and crept into his bed of leaves and deerskin. The soft skins never felt so good before and he was glad the roof was close over his head. He knew he would enjoy hearing the rain fall on it and running over the edge while he was so near and all nice and dry and warm.

It did not rain that first night. But Abe heard something on the roof just above his head. It went back and forth, back and forth, making a scraping noise. It was not like a

squirrel or a bird. He wondered what it could be.

The next morning he went out to look. He found a long, bare limb reaching across the cabin roof. His father had cut some of the limbs off a near-by tree, but this one was left and bent down over the little house like a big, gray finger. When the wind stirred, it moved back and forth as if writing.

Abe called Sarah. "Look!" he exclaimed. "Look at the long finger writing on the roof right over my bed. All night it wrote and wrote. I wonder what?"

"Do trees know how to write?" Sarah asked.

"They're alive, just as 'live as we are. They can't talk, but maybe they can write."

"And maybe the tree knows we have come here to live and wants to tell us something. Maybe it's a good-luck sign, Abe."

"I'd like to know."

"Let's ask mother if there's anything in the Bible about trees."

"There's bound to be something about trees in the Bible. There's so many of them and they're such good friends to us. Some way live trees seem like people, and I hate to cut them down and burn them. Maybe the writing tree is telling me not to do it any more."

When a few moments later Sarah and Abe appeared before Mrs. Lincoln asking about trees she said, "Yes, there's a lot in the Bible about trees. One of the nicest verses says a good man is like a tree planted where it can get plenty of water. 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,' the Book says. 'His leaf also shall not wither.' Isn't that a nice verse about a tree? And over in Revelation it tells about a tree that bears all kinds of fruit. Its leaves are always green and have the power of healing all kinds of trouble."

"I wish we had a tree like that."

"That tree grows in heaven, little Sarah, where we go to rest after our hard lives here and where God himself wipes all tears from our eyes. Isn't it a lovely promise?"

"Yep," answered Abe, "but I want to know if that tree is writing."

"Listen carefully the next time that it moves on the roof," Mrs. Lincoln said, smiling. "If it writes it will make letters. You can put them together as you do the letters you spell out of the Bible and make the words."

CHAPTER XI

TOPKNOT'S MIRACLE

THE new home of the Lincolns was near Pigeon Creek, which the children were eager to explore. But it was not until after the roof was on the cabin that Abe had time enough to examine the new watercourse and size up its value as a place for having good times.

Abe was fond of fishing, and there had been splendid fishing holes in the creek back in Kentucky. He hoped, too, there would be good swimming in the new water, for he loved to swim and was so little and thin he could dart about like an eel. And he wondered, though he did not say anything about it, if he would find a gray stone covered with moss, beside a clear pool, like the one back at the old home.

Sarah fished and swam almost as well as Abe did, but her first interest was in a "playing place," some spot where she could build a mud-pie kitchen and a school for her dolls to go to. And she hoped to find riding-horses, for better than anything else she liked to jump onto a good, stiff sapling, push her foot

against the ground, give a big upward spring and fly into the air.

Abe and Sarah wandered up the creek and followed it down for quite a distance. Abe had his sharp hatchet in his belt, for the children had already heard wolves howling and Mr. Lincoln had seen two bears and a wildcat.

The reward of the children's search was plenty of fishing holes, and not far from the cabin they found one of the best swimming places they had ever seen. On one side of the creek the bank was high enough to jump from and there were low-hanging branches to make a shade.

"This is better than our best hole in Knob Creek," Abe said.

"Won't the water feel good when summer comes?" Sarah replied. "But I'm looking for a grape-vine swing."

The swing was not found, but something the children had never heard of took its place very nicely. This new something was a grape-vine jumping rope, one end of which was fastened to a very large tree. The other end lay on the ground instead of across a limb high in the tree, as most grape-vines do.

Holding the free end, Abe turned the rope while Sarah jumped "black pepper" until her cheeks were like roses and her heart went

so fast she could not count the beats as her hands lay above it.

It was on the first trip they made up the creek Sarah found a turtle-shell lying in the leaves like a little basket.

"It was alive once," Abe said. "I wonder if it died."

"'Course. It's not here, is it?"

"Maybe it got killed and something ate it just as if he was eating out of a dish."

"I *hope* the poor thing was not eaten. But if he was it happened a long time ago, 'cause this shell is as clean as a gourd dipper and a lot prettier. Let's take a drink out of it."

When they had taken a drink the turtle-shell was used as a boat for a few sails near the shore before they went home.

Altogether Abe and Sarah were much pleased with their first tour of Pigeon Creek, though the woods were sere and gray and the wind sighed through their tops like something lost.

"It'll be a grand place in summer," Sarah told her mother. "It'll be as nice as it was on Knob Creek and we'll have good times playing."

Under the root of a big tree at the edge of the creek was the spring. Abe carried most of the water for the cabin, though Sarah

helped sometimes and once in a while Mrs. Lincoln went for it.

But Abe never let his mother come up the hill with water when he could carry it for her. She had never been very strong since the stormy night of his birth and there was a great deal of hard work for her to do, so both children were glad to help her.

One day as Abe was coming up the sloping pathway to the cabin, he saw Topknot running as fast as her yellow legs would carry her with something dangling from her beak.

What it was Topknot had found Abe could not imagine, for it seemed to be something alive, wiggling, twisting, and turning.

Putting his pail down, Abe started after Topknot, but the faster he ran the faster she ran, and it was not until he stopped chasing her that the hen came to a standstill. When she did so she dropped the wiggling thing and pecked it as if getting ready for a meal. Then, seeing Abe coming toward her, she seized the object and started running again.

When Abe finally got close enough to see what the hen had, he found it to be a snake about a foot long. She had been scratching around a stump and had uncovered the little snake from the bed into which he had gone for the winter. He was not as lively as he

would have been in warm weather. Still he was not so cold that he did not know something was dragging him around, pecking his head and treating him most roughly.

After she had run about some time, Topknot dropped the snake and began in dead earnest to eat him. First she swallowed his head. Then she twisted her neck and swallowed a little more.

The snake was squirming now worse than ever, for he was going into a tight, dark pocket so narrow he could not get his mouth open to bite.

Abe stood by and watched with much interest as the hen worked and twisted and twisted and worked until the last end of the snake's tail had disappeared down her throat. For a moment after finishing her remarkable dinner the hen stood quite still. Then she turned her head from one side to the other as if looking to see what had become of the snake.

Taking up his pail of water, Abe hurried up the pathway shouting, "Sarah, S-a-r-a-h! Topknot's et a snake and it'll kill her!"

"Can't we get it out?" Sarah inquired anxiously.

"Nope. It went down hard and it would be like unravelling her insides to get it out. We better give her some tea."

"There's some root tea already made—it's headache tea."

"I'll ketch poor old Topknot and you get the tea ready."

So Abe caught Topknot, Sarah brought the tea and they penned the hen up, putting the tea before her.

"She won't touch it," Sarah said, "and look at her crop!"

"That's the snake sticking out in a hump. I don't reckon the tea would help much anyway. There's too much snake."

"Poor Topknot," Sarah said sadly. "She'll be dead in the morning, won't she?"

"Yep," Abe answered, "and we'll have a funeral."

"Will the snake be dead by that time?"

"I reckon so."

"I'm about to cry," Sarah said with trembling voice.

"Don't do it. Wait till in the morning at the funeral."

It was very well Abe advised Sarah not to shed tears for Topknot, for the next morning she was singing, the loudest, cheeriest singing the children had ever heard from a hen and before long she laid an egg—a big, fat, white egg, the first since she left Kentucky.

Holding the egg in his hand, Abe said,

"This egg was a snake yesterday. Topknot's done a miracle."

"What's a miracle? Is it an egg?"

"Don't you remember what your mother read about a miracle out of the Bible? It's something that can't happen and does, like changing a snake into an egg."

After gazing a moment in astonishment, Sarah said, "How'd she do it?"

"I don't know."

"The snake was alive. Where did its life go?"

"Into the egg, I reckon. Eggs are alive. They hatch into chickens."

"This egg ought to hatch into a snake."

"It won't do it."

"It's made of a snake."

"Don't matter. Topknot has changed the life that was in the snake to the life that will be in the chicken if we hatch it."

"How'd she do it?" again asked the astonished Sarah. "Let's ask mother."

"All right, but if tain't in the Bible, maybe she won't know about this kind of a miracle."

CHAPTER XII

WOLVES

AFTER the Lincolns moved into their unfinished cabin, Mr. Lincoln and Abe went to work outside. The howling of wolves in the big, wild woods and the scream of a panther up Pigeon Creek told them the cow must be protected and a safe place must be fixed for the calf and the pig.

To keep the cow safely, a small stockade was made of trees cut sharp on top and set close together. Over them a thick brush shelter was laid and at night the cow was driven in from the near-by woods where she grazed, and shut up in the pen.

The pig's house was to be made like the cow's, only smaller. But it was several days before Abe had time to build the little pen, so piggy was put in with the cow for a few nights.

One night not long after they had moved into the cabin, Thomas Lincoln with Nancy and the children sat around the fire listening to what Mr. Lincoln had to tell of his visit to the Gentryville store that day.

As he talked he used his hands, "gritting" corn on a home-made "gritter"—a piece of tin, thick with nail holes on the edges of

which the grating was done. It was slow work, but in a couple of hours' time he could make a panful of meal which would provide bread for the next day.

"They do say the wolves is mighty bad further to the north. A man at the store was telling how they're eating sheep and calves and even dogs. Next thing they'll be attacking men. They're driv to it by the snow and cold I reckon. Already a boy has been chased by a pack of wolves and just escaped with his hide. You ought to have heard the fellow tell how the starving beasts ran that boy."

"Tell it, tell it," Abe and Sarah exclaimed, for Thomas Lincoln was a good story-teller and the children were always glad when he told one.

The story he told them of the boy who barely escaped making a meal for the hungry wolves was one of his best. The boy had to carry a message to the nearest neighbor, who lived several miles away. The river which ran past both places was frozen over, and as the boy was a good skater and could travel much more quickly this way, he decided to go on the ice.

He left his home soon after dinner, expecting to be back well before dark. The trip to the neighbor's was safely made, but the boy was delayed on his return so that it was al-

most dusk when he found himself on the river bound for home.

He had not gone a mile when back in the dark woods he heard the call of a wolf. Pretty soon he heard it again and again. Then he heard another wolf. They were a long way off and he heard only two, which did not alarm him. It was not long, however, before he heard the yelping again, this time nearer, and there seemed to be three or four.

Knowing that wolves hunt in packs, the boy hurried on. The moon was coming up and would make of the river a shining track. But the forest was black as midnight, and not hearing the animals for several minutes, he thought they might have been going another way.

His hope was short. He heard them again, much nearer and many more of them—maybe a dozen—maybe twenty, he could not tell. He glanced up the bank toward the dark forest but saw nothing.

On and on the boy skated as he had never skated in his life. He was not near home yet, but he was going very fast and he knew he could outrace the wolves unless they came upon him soon.

And this is just what they did. The next time he heard the yelping it was quite near, and out of the black woods rushed the pack,

yelping and snapping and headed straight for the lone skater.

Then it was the real race started. Never did a skater go faster. He fairly flew over the ice, knowing as he sped on that if he should strike a rough place he would be thrown down and the pack would make short work of him.

The wolves gained, and when they were so close it seemed to the boy he could hear them panting, he turned suddenly and shot out sideways.

The pack dashed on for a short distance, tumbling over themselves in an effort to turn when they saw their prey had escaped, and before they caught up with him the boy had covered a good distance.

Several times he dodged the howling pack. The last time he did so there was a snarling and a yelping, for a wolf had fallen under the racing beasts to lessen their progress. Whether or not the pack stopped to eat their fallen comrade the boy did not know. He only knew he was nearing home. Another short bend in the river and he would see the cabin on the bank with a light in the window.

Before the racing boy reached the last bend the famished pack was again close at his heels. But he turned in safety and yelled as loud as he was able when travelling so fast.

It was not necessary for him to call, how-

ever. From the cabin his father and mother were watching, and almost as soon as the light from the window reached his eager eyes the glad sound of a gunshot struck his ears.

The shot did not reach the pack, but a second shot caused the voracious beasts to drop back and the boy reached home safely.

It was a thrilling tale as told by Thomas Lincoln, and for a moment after he had finished, the children sat silent, casting furtive glances toward the deerskin hanging over the open front of their house. Several times Sarah had moved her stool nearer her father. Now she moved it yet a little closer.

Abe had just started to ask a few questions when all four of the Lincolns were startled by a sharp yelp from the dog outside, immediately followed by a terrible mixture of growls and howls and snapping of teeth. The next minute the dog came dashing under the deerskin curtain, yelping with fright and with a bloody nose. Without stopping an instant, he rushed under the bed, where he lay whining and choking as if his throat were hurt.

Mr. Lincoln sprang up and took his gun from over the chimney.

"Must be a big beast," he said. "Tige don't get scared at nothing. Something's got at his throat."

Going to the door he listened. For a brief

time all was still. Then, by the expression of his face and the way he turned his head, the children knew Mr. Lincoln heard something.

"He's going toward the calf pen," Abe's father said. "Like enough he smells the pig."

"And he might climb over," gasped Sarah.

"Don't know. Don't know what kind of a varmint it is. But we'll soon find out. Get a torch, Abe. Let's go out."

In the light of a torch Abe and his father went to the calf pen. They saw nothing, but the cracking of brush at the edge of the timber told them something was moving there. To the relief of Abe they found the pig all right.

"Let's take him in," he said. "I'll hoist him into the loft with me and to-morrow I'll finish the pen."

"He's all we've got to start with," Mr. Lincoln replied. "Bring him on in."

So Abe got the sleepy little pig, which really wasn't a "he" at all, and with it in his arms went back to the cabin.

"Abe Lincoln!" Sarah exclaimed when she saw her brother bringing the pig in. "You're bringing a pig right into the house."

"Yep," he answered, grinning, "and, worse yet, I'm going to take him into the loft with me."

"You wouldn't sleep with a pig, would you?"

“I don’t think he’ll mind,” Abe said. “He’s used to sleeping in leaves and he won’t know but what he’s in his own bed. He’s all we got to raise a fresh pig family with, and I’d rather let him sleep all over me than have him eaten by a wolf or panther.”

The next day Abe finished the pigpen. He made it good and secure, driving little trees so close together no wolf nor wildeat could get between them, and the top was also of small trees placed close together. When it was all done Abe and Sarah threw in a pile of dry leaves and piggy was put in his house.

It was a good thing the pig’s house was well fixed for the very next night the wolves came.

Abe was lying in the loft under his deer-skin. The moving finger of the tree was writing slowly and gently just over his head and he was wondering what it was saying. He was thinking, too, of the miller and the miller’s mother and counting to one hundred, when down in the timber he heard a wolf howling.

He did not listen to the tree finger any more nor think of the miller. He thought of the boy on the ice and wondered if he would hear more wolves.

Sure enough! Again it came—a long-drawn-out, thin howl.

There was a crack at the side of his bed through which he could look into the yard.

He moved so he could see through it with one eye.

Again he heard the wolf, or maybe another. The moon was up and the forest cast a shadow in which he saw something moving. At first he could not tell what it was. But it came nearer and nearer. Then a second something moved in the shadow and a third. It was wolves, as Abe saw when they moved into the light, and they were going toward the pigpen.

The first wolf that reached the pen ran around it a couple of times, then stood on his hind legs and sniffed. Another stood on his hind legs and still another. Then they dropped on all fours again and trotted around the pen, stopping at a crack now and then to sniff.

Abe crawled out of bed and scrambled down the peg ladder. He knew his father was asleep for he was snoring. But he did not hesitate. Shaking his father's head, he whispered, "Get the gun! Get the gun!"

Thomas Lincoln sprang up and looked around.

"The wolves are here," Abe said excitedly. "Look out and see."

Mr. Lincoln looked out. Then he placed the muzzle of his gun carefully in a crack of the cabin and fired. There was a loud report followed by a snarl and howl of pain.

Mr. Lincoln reloaded the gun and went to the pigpen. A moment later he called Abe.

"Look," said his father as Abe reached the pen. "I got one."

There it lay, looking white in the moonlight, and Abe almost felt sorry for it even if it was a wolf.

"He'll make a good bedcover for cold weather," Mr. Lincoln said, running his fingers through the gray fur.

CHAPTER XIII

“CHICKEN-HEARTED ABE”

AFTER the Lincolns had been in Indiana about a year, some people named Sparrow, with whom Abe's mother had lived before she married Thomas Lincoln, sent word they were coming to live near them. With them was coming a boy named Dennis Hanks.

Dennis was ten years older than little Abe, but he was a good-natured boy, who liked to hunt and fish more than to work, and he had found little Abe an interesting child and had spent much time with him back in Kentucky.

The coming of the Sparrows was a great event in the lives of their friends, the Lincolns, as well as their own, for Thomas Lincoln bought a new piece of ground adjoining his old place and built a new home for Nancy, leaving the old, fourteen-foot cabin for the Sparrows.

The new home was to be the best Nancy Lincoln had ever lived in since she married Thomas. The boards made for the roof were made by Thomas Lincoln and it took him six months to finish them for they were all hand-cut. Little Abe cut oak trees and rived out

the boards to make the gable ends. It was hard work for a small boy, but he had learned to work and was growing strong swinging the axe and smoothing boards.

In the new house there was to be a real puncheon floor, a real front door with a strong wooden latch, a better chimney than the old cabin had, and a place for a window when Thomas should be able to get the paper covering for it. Nobody in the wildwoods had glass windows and few had paper. Nancy was very happy to think she was to have a window after a while.

There were cracks between the logs when Nancy moved into the new house and the floor was not filled smoothly. But Thomas promised he would fix these defects and also make her some shelves and a couple of new chairs.

Abe and Sarah were delighted to see Dennis Hanks and took him, the first thing, up Pigeon Creek to show him the swimming pools and fishing holes and the places where Abe's father set traps. Sarah displayed the grapevine jumping rope and the splendid horses that pranced and galloped as they made imaginary journeys back to Knob Creek and Hodgen's Mill.

Dennis was interested in all they showed him, but what interested him most was the

deer-lick Abe told him about. It was less than a mile from the cabin and yet Thomas Lincoln had not discovered it.

Abe found it one day, and seeing deer tracks all around, he hid and watched until he saw the deer come. He had never told his father about it for fear Mr. Lincoln would shoot some of the deer, but he had gone back many times to see them.

"You ought to see them in the moonlight," little Abe said to Dennis. "Some of the bucks have the finest horns you ever saw and the mothers bring their babies to the water. I've seen them a heap of times. But don't you tell where the lick is. Promise, Dennis, you won't tell."

"Want me to cross my heart and spit over my left shoulder and bite my right ear?" Dennis answered, laughing.

"Please don't tell," Abe said.

But Dennis would not cross his heart and promise not to tell, and as soon as he found Thomas Lincoln he told him Abe knew where there was a deer-lick not so very far away.

Just a few days later Dennis came in one night with his gun, and after Mr. Lincoln had eaten his supper he took his gun down and told Abe to come along with them and show where the lick was.

Abe wanted to run away and hide. How he

wished he had never told Dennis anything about it. But he had to go and followed the two men in silence.

Not far from the lick there was a low place where Pigeon Creek lay thin and smooth like a tiny lake. Back of it there was a clump of willows. In the moonlight the water looked like flat glass with a shining moon in the middle and a shadow design at the edge where the willows grew.

Abe's father and Dennis hid in the brush and waited. After a while a deer came, then another and another. They came carefully, their ears alert and their nostrils turned to the faint breeze, but no scent of the man animal came to them for the men were on the off-side of the breeze.

A mother came with her little one. The woods were very still. The moon over the willows looked like a silver ball and cast a soft light on the deer. As they lifted their heads to lick their nostrils with the tips of their clean tongues, Abe looked into their faces. There was only one mother, but in some way their eyes all seemed to be mother eyes. The deer seemed to be almost people and Abe wanted to jump out and shout and frighten them away.

But he knew it was no use. For doing such a thing he would be punished severely and

his father would come another time and get the deer just the same.

While little Abe was wishing something would frighten the deer before it was too late, the sharp crack of a gun sounded.

There was a scurry and the sound of rushing feet, followed by another gun crack—and another. Two bucks disappeared in the deep shade of the woods. The mother deer staggered and fell to the ground. The little one dodged into the shadows but a moment later came timidly into view. There was another shot and the fawn fell where it stood looking for its mother.

Abe's father and Dennis sprang from their hiding places and in the clear moonlight Abe saw the gleam of his father's hunting knife.

At sight of this he turned and ran as fast as his legs would carry him. It seemed as if two big, hard hands like iron were squeezing his heart, it hurt so, while a choking lump had come into his throat and his eyes were hot.

“They had mother eyes,” he half sobbed as he ran.

When Thomas Lincoln and Dennis had done with their guns and knives and were ready to take their game home, they called Abe to help them.

But no little Abe came.

“I reckon he's done gone,” Dennis said.

"Ain't he never got over being chicken-hearted yet?"

"No. He's getting worse all the time. He'd eat acorns before he'd kill a deer."

"Don't he eat deer meat?"

"Yes, when there ain't nothing else to eat. What else can he do? I reckon it was bringing down the little one that run him off."

"Poor little critter—does seem a pity," Dennis said as he lifted the fawn's body to his shoulder. "But we got to eat and wear breeches. Tain't no use acting up like chicken-hearted Abe."

"God only knows what that boy's ever coming to. He's the worst excuse for a farmer ever was. He don't like trapping 'cause the traps hurt the varmints, and he ain't no good at hunting on account of him being so squeamish about a gun and knife."

"Maybe he'll make a saddle-bag preacher and go about exhorting. He spends a sight of time on the Bible for a small fry."

"Tain't 'cause he's so powerful religious he's spelling out the Bible. He wants to learn reading and it's all the book he's got."

"It's a school-teacher he'll be."

"He won't never get enough larnin' for that. If I was to prophesy I'd say he'll be a wood-cutter all his life. He's gifted in the use of an axe, all right."

CHAPTER XIV

LONG-TAILED GOBBLERS

AFTER Dennis Hanks came, Sarah found she must play alone more than ever, for now Abe had somebody else to tramp the woods with when he found time from his work and Dennis said he didn't want a girl always tagging along.

With the building of the new house Mr. Lincoln had decided to farm in earnest. This meant more work for little Abe. Yet he found time for fishing and swimming and scouring the woods and Dennis was a good companion.

One day the boys found a large buzzard feather, of which Dennis made a pen. He also made some ink, and Abe was delighted when the present was given to him. He had been making letters and figures on trees, on smooth ground and on the big fire-shovel. The shovel was hard, and when it became charred and smoky Abe scraped it clean and started fresh, sometimes using charcoal and sometimes rotten wood in place of chalk or pencil.

Not long after Dennis made the pen, he returned from the store with a nice little board which he gave Abe.

The treasure was put in the hollow of a big tree near the house, where Abe thought it would be safe until he should have time to scrape it smooth and get it ready for writing.

It was around the roots of this same tree Sarah had her doll's house and the hollow was their shelter in time of rain.

Sarah's dolls were many and of curious kind. One of them was a tiny potato with three eyes. This funny, round baby slept in a bird's nest Sarah had found in a bush. Another baby was a very small toad she caught by the creek. His bed was in the turtle-shell and she had to keep him tightly covered for he was a bad little fellow, always trying to run away.

The big girl and lady dolls were made of corncobs and their hair was corn silk, sometimes brown, sometimes yellow. She had one with green hair which she called her crazy lady.

These dolls were dressed in leaves tied around the middle with long, limber grasses which grew by the water. Some of the leaf dresses were green, some yellow and some red, and the hats these ladies wore were flowers.

One day when Abe was out clearing ground for a new field and Sarah was left to play alone, she gave her dolls a party. By the side of the big tree there was a flat stone

which was to be the table. Around this she smoothed the ground and swept it with a brush of leaves.

In the woods she found acorn cups and empty hickory-nut shells which were to be her dishes, and as this was to be an extra nice party she brought her precious white "overcoming" stone from the cabin and put it on the centre of the table for an ornament.

Berries and seeds and bits of tender grass were piled on leaf plates, and the last thing put on the table was a fat puffball for snuff. None of Sarah's dolls put snuff in their noses for they were nice ladies like her mother, who did not use snuff this way. But there were a great many people who sniffed snuff and Sarah thought it should be handy if some of these people should happen in to her party.

When the table was ready Sarah dressed the dolls. The frog baby was so bad-mannered he was not allowed to come, but she promised him she would bring him something good to eat in a pretty plate if he behaved himself. The potato baby was wrapped in a soft blanket made of a velvety mullen leaf and her cradle moved close to the table. New hair was put on all the corncob dolls and their dresses smoothed. When they were combed and dressed their mother went into the woods and down by the stream to select some new

hats. For some she found violets, for some windflowers, for others spring beauties, and for one she found a handsome pink moccasin.

When the purple and pink and yellow and white hats were on the heads of the ladies and they stood around the table, they looked almost too beautiful for words.

Just after she had placed her ladies at the table, Sarah heard her mother calling. It was one of the days Mrs. Lincoln was not well and she wanted Sarah to bring water from the spring, pick over some greens and get them stewing in the pot for supper.

While Sarah was doing all this Dennis Hanks came by on his way home from the store, where he had been after potatoes, and passing the big tree, he discovered Sarah's dolls.

He looked at them and grinned. Then, slipping his sack of potatoes to the ground, he opened it and grinned some more. He took out several potatoes which had sprouted until they had long, crooked tails. Some of these tails were white, some were pale yellow, and some were spotted with green. As Dennis looked at them his grin turned into a laugh, not a loud one, however, for he did not want Sarah to hear him.

When he had enjoyed himself laughing, Dennis took all the fine ladies standing around

the party table and hid them in the hollow of the tree, and in their places he stood a row of horrible, humpbacked, long-tailed potatoes.

Then he took Abe's new board and with a bit of rotten wood from a stump near by he wrote in letters almost as crooked as the tails of the strange-looking things at the table, "We et em." This board he stood against the white stone on the table, after which he hid behind the tree and watched for Sarah.

Before she returned Abe came. Dennis showed what he had done and together they laughed and whispered until they saw Sarah coming.

In a great hurry to get back to the party, Sarah did not notice the boys, and when she came to the table and saw those horrid, long-tailed, humpbacked animals standing where her lovely ladies had been, she did not know what to think until she saw the letters on the board.

Sarah could not read, but she thought she knew who had made the letters, for her brother would not take her dolls from her.

While she stood wondering something like a growl came from behind the big tree and a low voice said, "We et em! We're the long-tailed gobblers! We et em!"

"Dennis Hanks did it," Sarah exclaimed, half sobbing. "The hateful thing!" and she

caught up the board and began beating it against the stone table. Dishes and food flew in every direction and the long-tailed gobblers were being beaten into shapeless pulp when Abe, seeing his highly prized board in danger, hurried from his hiding place.

But it was too late. Just as he reached the stone the board cracked and fell into three pieces.

It was now Abe's time to be serious. His thin face grew sad and his voice was unsteady as he said, "O Sarah, you've busted it."

Then Dennis Hanks came out, shouting angrily, "You've busted it! You've busted it!"

"I wish I could bust you!" Sarah cried. "You've killed all my children!"

"I didn't. Here they are," and from the hollow of the tree Dennis brought them, dainty and fresh as when Sarah had left them.

"Don't you know a joke when you meet it in broad daylight, Sarah Lincoln? You knew the potatoes hadn't eaten your old ugly cornucobs."

"They're not ugly, not half as ugly as you are! You're as ugly as a cross-eyed coon."

This was the worst thing Sarah thought of to say to Dennis, so she turned to Abe, who was trying to fit the pieces of board together.

"It wasn't you," Sarah sobbed, "and now

your board is broke and you can't write and I'm awful, awful sorry."

"You ought to have a good beating, that's what you ought!" Dennis, still very angry, exclaimed.

"You 'tend to your own business, Dennis Hanks," Sarah replied. "Me and Abe get along all right when you're not here. You're too big and low-down for us. You go home—*go right now* and stay away from our place all the rest of your life. Go on! Go on! Go on!"

"Sarah's mad," Dennis said as he took up his potato sack and started toward home.

CHAPTER XV

MUSIC

STRETCHING across the sky-line just beyond Pigeon Creek, there was a long, low hill on which grew a large family of pines, some of which had straggled down the slope and scattered in a flat place not a great distance from the Lincoln cabin.

Here and there a larger tree than the others held out its long green arms and feathery green fingers as if trying to gather the smaller trees under its protection.

One of these beautiful larger pines grew quite close to the cabin. When Thomas Lincoln cleared the place for the house and cut timber to make it, he left this tree for two reasons. Half-way up its trunk a bunch of knots spoiled it for straight timber. This was one reason. The other was that Mrs. Lincoln wanted it left so she could put a bench under it where she could churn in the summer and wash berries and greens, and trim fat meat scraps for the soft-soap kettle.

So Thomas Lincoln left the tree and Abe made his mother a low, comfortable stool which fitted against it. Here she often sat,

sometimes leaning against the shaggy, sweet-smelling bark, watching the needles move against the blue sky and hearing their soft rustle as if the tree were trying to tell her something. She never knew just what the tree would say in words but she was sure it would be something pleasant, for the gentle music always rested her.

Another thing Mrs. Lincoln loved was a cardinal that nested somewhere in the woods close by. On a slope near the wood there was a thicket with trailing vines and some low-growing flowers. Here the handsome red bird often sang just as if he were giving a concert for the little gray mother who sat under the pine. Perhaps he knew by the glad light in her eye when he sang that she loved him.

When he had sung several times, Mrs. Lincoln told the children about him.

“The first bird Sarah ever noticed was a red bird back in Kentuck,” she said. “She was too little to remember, but I will never forget how we sat on the step and listened as the bird sang near us. The bird that sings here sings exactly the same way—sings as if he was just running over with life, and every living creature loves life. I guess that’s why I love to hear the red bird sing. If you’ll

keep still as mice you can sit by me and maybe he will sing for all of us."

Sitting on the ground beside their mother, Sarah and Abe rested their heads against her knee and kept very quiet with their eyes on the thicket of green vines.

At first the bird did not come and the children had to keep still for what seemed a long time. Then there was a flash of red, a bright spot on the shining green, and the song began.

Abe and Sarah almost held their breath for fear the beautiful feathered songster with his crimson crown would take fright before he finished. But he did not, and after that, every day when Abe was about the house Sarah would say, "Let's go out and see if mother's bird will sing."

One day after the red bird had sung his song and gone back into the woods, Sarah and Abe got into an argument about music. They agreed that the red bird and all singing birds made music. But when Abe said such things as crickets and frogs made music Sarah disputed it with him. And when he said water running over stones and tree roots and leaves moving in the summer breeze made music, Sarah told her mother Abe was going crazy.

"I don't think Abe is crazy. I think music is any good sound that rests folks and makes them happy or that makes them think

of good things like God and heaven. And I know Abe is right about water making music, for when I hear the pines rustling I always think of the sea."

"What sea?" Sarah asked.

"Back in Virginia, where I lived before I was married to your father, I heard an itinerant preach about the sea. He says most all the earth is made of water instead of land like we think, and the water is called 'sea.' "

"You know the Red Sea," Abe said to Sarah.

"The Red Sea. That's the sea that drowned all those bad people. Is that the sea you hear when the pines make their noises?" Sarah asked her mother.

"No, not the Red Sea. The sea I am talking about has never drowned anybody. The itinerant—that's a preacher you know—had crossed the real sea. He was many days on a boat. He told about the water and sky and waves 'till you could sit right in front of him and see them. He said he lived by the sea for years and learned much about God from it. When the sea was quiet and the water all shining in little green waves, it was like the smile of God. When it got black and the waves piled up and roared and sucked boats under, it was like the wrath of God. The sea is always moving—rocking like something in

a cradle. The land along the edge is the side of the cradle—miles and miles of it, and it is the motion of the water washing against the shores that makes a noise like the trees make.

“The meeting-house where this itinerant preached was in a woods, and the night I heard him the wind was blowing just a little, the soft way it blows when a rain is brewing. ‘Shut your eyes and listen,’ the preacher said. ‘It’s the sound of waves a long way off.’ Then he told about the storms of life that come to everybody as they journey from this world to the next. ‘But God takes care of his own,’ he said, and he lined off a hymn-tune that went like this,” and Mrs. Lincoln softly sang:

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps on the sea
And rides upon the storm.”

“God rides on a storm!” Sarah exclaimed. “I wish I could see him do it!”

“My aunt bought a hymn-book at this meeting and when I married she gave it to me. Next to the Bible, it is the best book I know of. I learned lots of the songs, but I never learned any I liked better than the one about God planting his footsteps on the sea. The preacher’s text was about the Crystal Sea

that reaches to God's throne with an emerald rainbow reaching over it."

"An emerald rainbow? What kind is that?" Abe asked.

"It's a green rainbow—an emerald is green, and it must be very wonderful and beautiful to be over the throne of God and the Crystal Sea."

"What's crystal?" Sarah asked.

"The preacher said it's like glass—like spring water without a speck in it, only more shiny. He said the souls of us go to God across the Crystal Sea in little boats pushed by angels. When he got done telling about the Crystal Sea the people all sang that good song that begins 'Jesus, lover of my soul' and ends with 'Safe into the haven guide.' I was a young girl then, but I will never forget that meeting though I've never been able to recall the preacher's name. All I remember is the way he looked and that he was a Wesleyan. I'm not likely ever again to hear a preacher that knows about the sea. So I thank God I heard this one and that he taught me how to shut my eyes and hear the sea—feel the sea. How it stirs up something inside of me that I have no words to tell about—something that calls—and calls—and calls until I wonder if it is the Crystal Sea calling through the trees."

“What I want to know,” Abe said, “is why that rainbow over God’s throne is green!”

“Maybe because green is the color of life. Live things are always green and God is always alive.”

“Must be God does like green better than any other color,” little Abe said thoughtfully. “He’s made ten times as much of it.”

CHAPTER XVI

ACROSS THE CRYSTAL SEA

LESS than a week after Mrs. Lincoln had talked with the children about the Crystal Sea, Abe called Sarah out behind the cabin early one morning and whispered, "I had a dream last night."

"What?"

"Isn't it bad luck to tell it before breakfast?"

"Your father knows about signs and luck. Ask him."

Abe went back in the cabin. "Is it bad luck to tell a dream before breakfast?" he asked.

"Worst kind—nearly as bad as to meet a white mule on Friday the thirteenth. I've gone two miles out of my way more times than one when I've seen a white mule coming. And telling dreams before breakfast is off the same piece of luck."

"Yes, it's bad luck to tell it before we eat," Abe told Sarah, "but I'll tell it right after."

"Was it a nice dream?"

Abe's face was serious as he thought. "I don't know. I reckon it was," he presently

said. "But some of it's got away from me."

"That's 'cause we haven't eaten yet."

After breakfast Abe's father told him to take the axe and start making rails for a new garden fence. Sarah went with her brother and as they walked he told what he could remember of the dream.

"I saw a ship—far away—sailing away.* It got dimmer and dimmer. The water was strange water. It was shiny but not the bright shiny that makes you bat your eyes. It was a soft shiny like morning."

"Was anything in the boat?"

"I've been trying to think."

"Where was it going?"

"I don't know. Maybe the ship was made of clouds and was going the same place clouds go."

"But you said it was on water."

"Yes, strange water."

"You just dreamed about the Crystal Sea mother told us about."

"I can see it—see it now—a strange ship on a strange sea."

"You never saw a sea. How do you know it's a strange sea you dreamed about?"

"There's something strange about it anyway and I don't feel good."

"Dreams are signs. Maybe the cow's go-

* See note 10.

ing to find a new calf. I heard mother say it's time she did."

"I don't see what a cow and a calf has to do with a strange ship on a strange sea."

"I don't see what your kind of dream has to do with anything. You never saw a ship nor a sea. If I was going to dream I'd dream things with some sense."

Before noon that same day Dennis Hanks came after Mr. Lincoln. The Sparrows were sick, very, very sick, Dennis said.

Mr. Lincoln hurried to the Sparrow home and did all he could for them but before noon the next day both Mr. and Mrs. Sparrow had gone to the other world. Dennis Hanks helped Mr. Lincoln make two coffins, and after the Sparrows had been laid to rest Dennis went home with Mr. Lincoln.

At this time Nancy and the children were well and Thomas Lincoln was glad, as he and Dennis wanted to take a long trip through the forest.

But the day after Mr. Lincoln went away Mrs. Lincoln took sick. She was not just tired this time. She was hot and her tongue seemed thick so that she could not easily talk.* Her gray eyes were bright as stars and she asked often for water.

Sarah and little Abe stayed at the house,

* See note 11.

did the work and waited on their mother. When she slept they sat on the step outside and told each other in whispered tones that they would be glad when she was well and could talk to them again.

One day when their mother had moaned while trying to sleep and had been very thirsty and restless, the children saw her fold her hands as children do when they say "Now I lay me," and her lips moved, but all they heard were the words "God" and "storm baby."

"What is she talking about?" Sarah asked Abe.

"I think she's praying."

"She said something about a 'storm baby.'"

"Maybe that's the little one she left in Kentuck."

"That's it," Sarah answered. "It was left out in the storms."

When Nancy Lincoln opened her eyes a little later she looked for the children and held out her hands to them.

"Get me the Bible and the hymn-book," she said, speaking slowly as if it were hard work.

The children brought the books and put them on the bed.

"Abraham—Sarah," she said, taking their

hands, "last night I saw the sea, the beautiful, beautiful sea. A little boat went out on it and I was in it. And I heard music—sweet music—sweeter than the music of summer leaves or the red bird. Abraham, I want you to have the Bible. It is the word of God. Study it. Love it. It will guide you across life's stormy sea to that other sea that lies before the throne of God. Be kind to your father. Take good care of your sister. Always speak the truth."

She could not talk any more. Abe took the Bible from the bed and put it on the chair.

When she had rested a little the sick mother held the hymn-book to Sarah, saying, "The hymn-book is yours, my little Sarah. Next to the Bible it is the best of books. Learn its songs. Sing them for your little brother and your father. And I want you now, you and your brother, to sing for me."

"Which one?" Sarah asked.

"The one that begins 'Jesus lover of my soul.'"

The children knew several lines, but before they had got far with their singing, Tige, just outside, started up such a pitiful howling they had to stop to chase him away.

"He doesn't like our singing," Abe said, coming back in the cabin.

"He ought to have more sense than to

make a noise like that when somebody's sick," Sarah said indignantly.

Starting afresh, Sarah and Abe sang the verse ending with the lines,

"Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last."

As they sang their mother smiled. She looked happy and kissed the children, which made them happy, too.

When Thomas Lincoln returned home the next day he found his wife very sick. All night he sat up with her. Toward morning she went to sleep holding his hand.

The sun rose but Nancy Lincoln did not wake up. When Sarah and little Abe climbed down from the loft she was still sleeping and their father sat beside her with bowed head.

Something in their mother's face and their father's silence made the children stop. As they did so their father lifted his face and in a husky voice said, "She's dead."

With a cry, Sarah threw herself on the bed, calling to her mother. Her father put his arms around her, telling her not to cry. A moment later he thought of little Abe but he was nowhere to be seen.

Out behind the thicket where the cardinal sang he lay on the ground, face down.

Dennis Hanks helped Mr. Lincoln make a coffin, and together they made a soft bed in it

of sweet pine needles, and put a bedcover over it. Then with clumsy, shaking hands, Thomas Lincoln smoothed the plain gray dress into folds about the little body, which he took in his arms and tenderly placed in the coffin. With trembling fingers he smoothed the hair back from the white brow and gently closed the half-open eyes. Not many years before she had been his bride. Now, after a short life of hardship and poverty, she was gone.

Sarah came first to look at her mother. A little while she looked, too surprised to say anything. Then she ran to find Abe.

"Abe, Abe," she whispered, "come and see. She's as beautiful as an angel!"

Together the two little children went to the side of the crude coffin and looked in. The faint, sweet balm of the pine she had loved was all around their mother and her tired face had grown so rested and happy it seemed to them as if a shining light were coming from it.

Abe was glad when he heard the grave was to be near where the red bird sang. Abe's father and Dennis carried the coffin to the grave and gently lowered it. When Sarah heard the dirt falling she began to cry so pitifully Mr. Lincoln told Abe to take his sister away and stay quite a long time.

The next morning as the motherless chil-

dren stood beside the new mound Sarah said, "Let's cover it with leaves. If we can find some the color of the red bird maybe he'll come and sing for her here."

So they searched and found some early red leaves, which they strewed over the mound, and Sarah brought her treasured white stone to be placed in the centre.

The next day when they went to the grave there was something red on the white stone and glad music sounded as if it came straight from their mother's heart.

"He's found her," Sarah whispered to Abe.

"But she can't hear him," the little boy answered with a sob.

CHAPTER XVII

“DEAR TRACKS”

THE day after the burial of his mother, Abe was on his way to the spring, following Sarah, who had gone for water, when he heard her shouting with great joy.

He ran as fast as he could to learn why she was so happy, but when he reached the spring, instead of finding her laughing, he found her sitting on the ground crying.

“I thought you found something—something nice,” he said.

“I did—see,” and she pointed, “dear tracks.”

Abe looked. “That’s not a deer track,” he said, “that’s a—they are——”

“Yes, they are—they are *her* tracks, her dear, dear tracks.”

Abe stood above some clearly outlined footprints. Even to the print of the smallest toe they were clearly marked in the damp earth at one side of the spring.

“Our mother’s footmarks,” Abe said, with a big lump in his throat. “She will never make any more.”

“Let’s keep these always—it’s all we got left of our mother. Let’s build a wall around them. Let’s do, Abe.”

“If we build a wall around them so nothing can mash them and it doesn’t rain until they get good and dry we might keep them a long time,” he answered.

So they set busily to work carrying stones with which to build a wall, and after it had been built Sarah and Abe went every day to see the footprints. It did not rain and the damp soil dried, making a clean mould.

Then a walnut tree near by began dropping bright-colored leaves into the little walled memorial until it was entirely covered with a beautiful bright blanket of red and yellow.

“Look how they’re covered for winter,” Sarah said to Abe. “Maybe they will be here all winter long.”

But there came a fierce winter wind that seemed looking especially for leaves. It sucked into the hollows in the woods and found secluded corners along Pigeon Creek where fallen leaves lay cradled. Even down in the walled place Sarah and Abe had made, this rude wind went, tossing the leaves out and chasing them here, there and everywhere.

When Sarah found the tracks uncovered she clapped her hands and called her brother.

“Abe! Abe! Run! Hurry!”

Abe ran and found something very beautiful and very wonderful. Under the leaves the frost had been working on the tracks,

which were now filled with the finest and loveliest lacework ever seen, and there they were, two pure white, glistening footprints.

“It looks like angels,” said Abe.

“O Abe,” Sarah said, her eyes big with excitement. “Maybe she’s an angel and came and fixed these shining feet herself.”

Abe shook his head. “I don’t know if she had anything to do with making them. Cold has a heap to do with it. Haven’t we seen yards and yards of ice lace alongside the creek and flowers in cow tracks? But I’m sure she’s an angel anyway.”

“You don’t *know* it.”

“If there’s any real God He’s got His angels and our mother is one of them.”

“If she couldn’t stay with us I’m glad she’s an angel, ain’t you, Abe?”

“Yes, but we miss her—O Sarah, how we miss her!” and the little boy’s voice got all thick and trembly. “But she couldn’t stand things like the rest of us.”

“And maybe the little baby that went to heaven out of the grave back in Kentuck needs her more than we do. You see, I know how to cook corn dodgers and wash the pans,” Sarah said.

“We’ll get along,” Abe said bravely. “Let’s cover them up again. If the sun gets at them they’re gone.”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ROOST

Just before the slope to the spring began, there stood a white oak tree which was really a pair of twins. The two acorns from which it had grown had pushed through the ground at the same time and place and grew into a double tree. For a few years the two trees grew together. Then each little tree wanted to live its own life and grow its own way, so the two parted company for the rest of their up-reach toward the blue sky, but though they separated at the top they always remained joined at the bottom.

When little Abe saw these trees he said, "Look Sarah! I'll put steps like a ladder across between 'em and we'll build us a roost up in the branches."

"Goody!" Sarah exclaimed. "I always wanted to roost somewhere. It must be fun."

"We'll have a floor in our roost 'cause our toes won't hold us on the branches like birds' or chickens' hold them. Besides I want to lie down on my roost and think about things in the tree top."

So Abe made the ladder of pieces of small trees and Sarah helped him pull the wood

for the floor up into the branches. The green leaves overhead made a fine roof and the open places were windows, through which different views could be seen, and very lovely views some of these were.

Just beyond the cabin, on one side, was the low hill covered with pines which, when the wind stirred them, had made the children's mother think of far-away sea waves. On the other side Pigeon Creek wound in and out, showing here and there, through the woods, when the sun shone on it, like patches of silver, and there beyond the clearing was the forest, which was always beautiful though it was rather solemn and mysterious.

But it was the bright colors made by the sun when he rose in the morning and went to bed at night that Abe liked best. Many times he had watched the sun set from the roost. Sometimes he had seen in the bright coloring, purple like that of wood violets with silvery light around its edges. Sometimes when the sun, like a flaming, red ball, sank out of sight it turned the clouds back to the east into giant pink roses which moved slowly across the blue sky.

The getting up of the sun was even more beautiful than its going away. There seemed to Abe so much joy about it. Once he had stayed all night on the roost, to be awakened

by birds holding a concert almost over his head. On waking he turned his eyes to the east, from which the light comes. It was shining like gold and streaked and splotched with rose and madder, with crimson and vermilion, as if the color of ten thousand red birds had been painted on it, and Abe was not surprised that the birds were nearly splitting their throats in songs of gladness.

Little Abe thought of all sorts of things in his leaf-covered roost. One thing he thought about was Topknot's chicken. Poor Topknot was gone, nobody knew where. She stole her nest down by a big log over which grew a fine, large poke bush. Under its branches, reaching almost to the ground, she laid her eggs, and here she sat on them, hoping to hatch some babies.

Abe and Sarah watched her and every time she left the nest to get food and water, they counted the eggs. At first there were thirteen. Next time they counted there were ten, then seven, and finally, just about time for them to hatch, there were but three. Two of these were cracked and the children knew the chickens were alive and ready to come out.

The next morning they ran to the nest expecting to find the baby chickens. Instead they found a nest with but one egg in it. They

called Topknot and searched for Topknot but they never saw her again.

"A snake might have gotten the eggs," Sarah said, "but there's no snake around here big enough to eat Topknot, is there?"

"Nope," little Abe promptly replied. "It was some kind of a varmint got her. But this one egg is pipped and I can hear the chicken peeping. Let's hatch it in the sun."

So they placed it where it would be safe and warm and before night the chick had pecked and kicked his way out. Abe and Sarah took good care of him and in a few days he would follow the children as if they were hens.

It was while he was yet a very little chicken that something happened which puzzled Abe so that he thought of it a great deal. The baby chicken was pecking around in the open place in front of the cabin when something dark moved over him across the ground. It was only the shadow of a hawk's wings and the hawk was flying high. But at sight of the shadow the baby chick was seized with fright and, spreading his tiny wings, he ran as fast as his yellow legs could carry him under the cabin.

What puzzled Abe was this: How did the chicken know the hawk was its enemy? Even if mother hens can tell their little ones what will hurt them, Topknot never told this baby

about the sharp beak and strong claws of the hawk because she was gone before her little one came out of the shell.

Sometimes in his thinking Abe's mind went back to Kentucky and he thought of the good miller and his mother and wondered if he would see them again. Often he thought of his playmates on Knob Creek and the dog he gave Austin Gollaher because his father would not let him bring it to the new home.

Thinking of days back in Kentucky brought up another puzzle for Abe to work on. How could he, lying in his roost, go back in his mind to Kentucky? How fast could his mind go back? It must go so fast nobody could count its time of going, for the minute he thought of anybody back at the old home, that same minute he could see that face and hear that one's voice.

Once in a while little Abe thought of the whiskey barrels his father had brought with him to Indiana. Whiskey was good, he knew, to pay for things at the store in place of money. But somehow Abe connected the whiskey with the sadness in his mother's face and he took a dislike to it and made up his mind he would tell folks not to drink whiskey.*

Often Sarah took her dolls into the roost and Abe helped her play with them.

* See note 12.

Before her mother went away Sarah had taken the dolls to her when they needed new hair and eyes and mouths. So now Abe offered to put eyes and noses on a couple of new dolls for her.

"I'm going to burn the eyes," he said. "Then they'll be brown instead of red like poke juice makes them."

Sarah watched with interest as Abe heated the poker and tried to make brown-eyed dolls. But the corncobs caught fire and the whole doll was brown before the job was done.

"I'll not have a nigger baby," Sarah exclaimed, angrily tossing the cob away.

Abe laughed and then said, "I know how to do it. I'll make some black water with soot." He did this with better results though Sarah said she thought he could chop wood better than he could make faces on dolls.

One day while little Abe lay on his back watching the white clouds sail across the far, deep blue, he heard Sarah calling him. He thought she was having some kind of doll trouble and he did not want to be bothered, but he answered her for she was running and calling his name with every other step.

"Abe! Abe!" she exclaimed as her head appeared above the ladder, "I found the funniest plant you ever heard of."

"Where?"

“It’s growing just outside the fence of the cleared field. Its leaves are green like lovely lace. Its flowers are pink balls all dusted over with yellow powder. They have the sweetest little smell you ever stuck your nose into and it’s the smartest plant that ever grew.”

“What can it do?”

“It can get scared and shut up.”

“Get scared?” and Abe sat up and listened to what Sarah would say.

“Yes. I pinched it and it began to shut up tight. One leaf told another and that one told the next one, and as fast as one leaf told another it shut up tight ’till the long stem didn’t look as if it had one single leaf on it.”

“Leaves haven’t any mouths to talk to each other nor any fingers to poke each other. How did the plant know—how did it tell its leaves to shut up or they would get hurt?”

“What you asking me for? I just got done asking you?”

Abe thought a moment. Then he said, “I reckon this smart plant knows what it knows the same way foxes and minks and wolves and all fur animals know when a cold winter’s coming. Trappers can always tell when it’s going to be cold. Our own father says he hasn’t missed telling the kind of winter in fifteen years. Furs never tell lies. Thin fur—open winter. Thick fur—cold winter.”

“Yes, but what tells animals to get ready for a hard winter? How do they know what kind of a winter is coming? What was it told Topknot’s baby to run from the hawk? What tells beans and potatoes and vines how to grow?”

“They’re a hard-headed lot—potatoes are,” Abe answered, smiling. “Didn’t we try to make them grow down like worms? But even the log couldn’t hold them under.”

“But they crawled like worms ’till they got to the edge.”

“Yep. But they was only trying to find a way to get out. Soon as they struck daylight they went up instead of down.”

“And how did it know just what to do?”

“It didn’t. Skunks and rabbits don’t know either when they put on thick fur.”

“Something knows.”

“Yes, something knows and it’s something on the inside of live things. It’s in them all—in trees and potatoes and flowers like the one you found and it’s in chickens and fur-covered critters. I don’t know how it works but I know what does it.”

“What?”

“Tain’t nothing else but God. Sometimes I think I got it too. I feel strange on the inside as if something big was trying to push out. Maybe it’s something better than the ugly

hide and bones and big ears God give me."

"There's nothing the matter with your hide and bones nor your ears either, if they are big as cabbage leaves," Sarah assured her brother. "If God made your inside that's pushing to grow bigger and making you want to read and think strange things, He made your bones and hide just the same as He made the ugly shell the beautiful blue butterfly came out of when our mother was here."

"That's another thing I can't get through my head," Abe said thoughtfully. "How does a worm that never knows nothing but crawling, and is the ugliest, nastiest thing of them all, change into a critter with big, wide wings that can fly from the start and is pretty as a flower? I don't even know how he makes the shell he hatches hisself into a butterfly in. All I know is it must be God back of it all."

"If God's back of the whole thing what's the use of splitting your head trying to find out how He does it?"

"It don't hurt none to think about things," Abe answered.

CHAPTER XIX

ABE HAS A FUNERAL

WITH almost as much regularity as he washed his face at the creek and ate his daily corn pone, little Abe Lincoln studied at night. The Bible was his reader and spelling book, and the big, wooden shovel was the slate, on which he made his figures and letters.

When once in a while he failed to study Sarah knew he was either too tired or was thinking hard about something else.

One morning after Abe had sat two nights by the fire doing nothing but think, he told his sister he was going to Gentryville on business. Sarah tried her best to get him to tell what he was going for, but all he would say was, "Wait and see."

Sarah stayed alone that day. She had told Abe she was not afraid, but early in the afternoon she began watching for her brother and when she heard him shouting in the woods, she ran to meet him.

He was running, too, and shaking something.

"Look!" he cried, "I'm going to write a letter," and he held a sheet of paper and pencil before his sister's astonished eyes.

"A letter?" Sarah repeated in amazement. "Who to?"

“Elder Elkins back in Kentuck. Our mother didn’t have any funeral and I can’t stand it no longer.* He knew our mother and I’m going to ask him to come.”

“Where did you get that paper and pencil?” And Sarah moved close beside Abe and looked with curiosity at the pencil.

“I worked for the paper at the store. I cleaned up, set the shelves fresh and burned the trash. They loaned me the pencil. When I get the letter done they’re going to put it on the mail route for me.”

Nothing more exciting had ever happened in the Lincoln cabin than the writing of this letter. Abe made an extra bright fire and scraped the old shovel clean, the latter work calling a question from Sarah.

“What are you doing that for?”

“I never wrote no letter,” Abe said. “I got to make the words on the shovel first. When I get them just right I’ll put them on the paper.”

It was a big job and Abe worked at it until late. But he finally finished and folded his letter, Sarah looking on with great interest.

“They’ll tie it and seal it for me at the store,” Abe said proudly, “and when a carrier comes it will start out on its journey.”

After the letter had gone Sarah and Abe

* See note 13.

often talked about it and wondered if Elder Elkins would get it, whether he would answer it and whether he would come.

The letter reached Kentucky safely and when Elder Elkins found who had written it and what was wanted, he took the letter to the miller and his mother to read.

At first they could not make it out. Then the miller's mother spelled out "A-b-e L-i-n-c-o-l-n."

"Well, did I ever!" she exclaimed. "The child is really learning to write away off there in the wild woods. Poor little fellow! His mother dead, and he wants a funeral," and the miller's mother wiped a tear from her eye.

"Will you go?" she asked Elder Elkins.

"When the weather warms up and the roads and streams get passable."

"I am so glad. And you will write him, won't you?"

The miller's mother and Elder Elkins together wrote the reply to Abe's letter, for the Elder could not write much better than Abe could. They told him that when the weather turned warm, probably the first of June, the preacher would be there.

If it was a great day when Abe wrote the letter it was a greater day when the answer came. With Sarah looking on, Abe spelled the poorly written words slowly. Then to

be sure he knew what the letter said he carried it to Gentryville to the store to be read for him.

It was really true. In June his mother was to have a funeral, and as the time drew near the news was spread. From every direction people came, some walking, some on horseback and a few in wagons. From as far as twenty miles they came to a funeral not like any other because it took place such a long time after the grave had been made.

Abe and Sarah did not have any nice clothes to wear so they washed their old clothes in the creek and dried them on bushes. They were faded and wrinkled but they were clean, and who expected to see two little children living all alone in the wildwood fixed as nice as if they had a mother?

If the clothing of the children was not nice however, the grave was. Sarah took her white stone to the creek and washed and rinsed it until it shone. Grass had grown over the mound and Sarah found a wild rose bush not far from the house from which she made a wreath of roses for the centre of the grave. Inside this circle of pink and fresh green she placed her white stone and both the children thought it looked lovely.

As the people stood around the mound the preacher told them about the mother of the

two children and the wife of Thomas Lincoln. He had known her back in Kentucky. She was a true Christian, he said. She knew her Bible well, sang often and prayed.

After he had made his talk Elder Elkins had everybody kneel around the grave and he prayed that the little children might always remember their mother's Christian character and that her God might be their God and bring them to her in heaven when the storm of life was over.

Abe never knew just what else he said, but he saw tears running down the faces of the women, and the men took their caps off and held them in their hands.

After the prayer the people stood up and sang, and just before they left the preacher raised his hands, bowed his head and said something about "the peace of God" staying with them all forever.

When they had all gone Sarah said to Abe, "Do you think she knows about it?"

"If she's an angel maybe she was standing right there beside us, only we couldn't see her."

"And maybe she heard every word and knows we had a funeral for her."

"Anyway we know it. I couldn't have stood it all my life if our mother hadn't had a funeral."

CHAPTER XX

“LET’S DIE, ABE”

THE winter following the death of their mother was the most sad and lonely time Sarah and little Abe Lincoln had ever known.

Sometimes their father was home. When he was they had meat to eat, turkeys and bear and deer and possum, for he never passed through the woods without killing something, and he liked to cook and eat meat. Sometime Dennis Hanks stayed with them. More often he was trapping with Thomas Lincoln or at the Gentryville store listening to and telling stories.

So Sarah and Abe were much alone and did not always have good meat, though they never went hungry for in the fall their father had put several bushels of potatoes in under the bed. There was also plenty of corn in the cow loft. Abe could take this to the mill or he could “grit” it himself and make meal. Top-knot had been a long time gone and weasels caught the other two hens, so the children could have no more eggs until they found wild eggs in the springtime.

Mrs. Lincoln had not made Sarah any new dress nor Abe any new skin breeches for the

winter and their moccasins were thin and worn.

Sarah did not mind the worn clothing so much, however, as she did the steady diet of potatoes.

“I hate them! I hate them!” she exclaimed as often as it came time to eat.

And Abe would always say, “It’s taties or nothing.”

“Yes, taties or nothing! I’ll turn into a tatie before springtime comes again. My head will be a tatie. My ears will be taties. My nose will be a tatie. My eyes will be taties. My fingers and my feet will be taties. Then I’ll get rotten and go to squash.”

“What would we do if we didn’t have the taties?” Abe asked.

“I’d starve and be done with it, and if it wasn’t for my kitten I *would* starve.”

Sarah’s kitten was her one real joy. The Sparrows brought a cat when they came from Kentucky. After they died Dennis Hanks brought the cat to Lincoln’s. One day, to Sarah’s great delight, she found three kittens with the old cat in a corner of the barn loft. They lived to be nice, fat kittens, when two of them and the old cat died. Dennis said they must have eaten a poison lizard. The third kitten was not even sick. Sarah mothered it and loved it dearly.

After the cow went dry the kitten had to eat potatoes and she did not like them any better than Sarah did. Sarah would take her potato from the hot ashes, open it, rumple it on the hearthstone and say, "Eat, kitty. I know it's nasty potato, but we don't want to starve, do we?" Then she would kiss the kitten and if it ate too slowly she would make pills of the potato and poke them into its mouth.

Abe kept to his desire to learn to read but he wished he had a new book. His mother had taught him so much of the Bible he wondered if he really was learning to read it or whether he knew it by heart. He missed his mother, too, all the time. But it was at night when the fire threw bits of light and moving shadows over her empty chair that he missed his mother most and longed with a great hunger to see her face and hear her voice.

The children tried to keep count of the days as weeks ran into months. They knew Thanksgiving came but they could not tell just when. With Christmas it was the same way, and it was really several days after Christmas had passed when Thomas Lincoln came home with a fat turkey and some molasses and pop-corn, and they had a real feast with pop-corn balls to eat around the fire. There was so much

gravy left in the kettle from the turkey, Sarah hid some of it to put on the kitten’s potatoes after her father had gone.

Snow fell early this season and lay on the ground weeks at a time. The pines bent under bundles of snowy white. The ground was blanketed with white and the sky was gray. Sometimes the wind howled outside like some big, savage thing trying to get in. When the wind howled like a hungry beast the snow was not large and soft like feathers. It was hard and fine and driven about like shot from a gun.

One night when all about the cabin was covered with snow and the wind was moaning like something lost, the two children sat before the fire. The door was tightly barred. Sarah held her kitten and Tige lay at one end of the fireplace. They were not afraid, these wildwood children, but they were lonesome.

Abe had taken the Bible from the shelf but he did not put it on the floor in front of the fire. He put it in the splint-bottomed chair, which his mother had always sat in.

A fresh bit of wood on the fire sent up fingers of flame that danced about and made shadows which, like dark spirits, played along the wall and over the chair and the unopened Bible.

Abe watched the shadows playing about

the empty chair and a big lump came into his throat. How he did want his mother. But he did not cry and the long, thin howl of a wolf not far back in the timber took his attention for the moment. Tige raised his ears, opened his eyes and shut them. Sarah covered the kitten's ears with her hands and whispered in its nose, saying, "Don't be scared. The old wolf can't get you nor anything we've got."

Before the wolf had stopped howling the wind began, and for a time they howled together as if trying to sing some horrible kind of a song. As the weird howling sounded through the cabin Sarah turned her eyes to the empty chair. She began crying.

"Let's die, Abe," she sobbed. "Mother's gone and there's two bushels more of potatoes, and hear the scary howling that's coming right after us. Let's die!"

"How'll we do it?" little Abe asked with unsteady voice.

"We can open the door and let the wolves in or we can sit on the steps all night and be frozen stiff by morning. Let's die and go where mother is. I'm tired staying here alone. Ain't you?"

"Yep. But God ain't wanting us yet or He'd find a way to kill us. He knows plenty of ways. Long as He don't let something drop

on us or ketch us we better stay on. But let’s go to bed, you and me and the kitten. We’ll lay close and tell stories under the cover.”

“You won’t tell a scary one, will you?”

“Not with everything howling like it is to-night.”

Abe pushed back the fire and covered it with ashes. Then in the dim light the children climbed the peg ladder to the loft and crept under the deerskin.

They had not been long under cover when Sarah said, “Abe, there’s something cold blowing into my head through my ears. I think they’re freezing stiff.”

Abe put his hand over by the wall. “The wind’s getting square in the north,” he said, “and shooting through these cracks.”

“Let’s go back downstairs. I hear something scratching.”

“That’s the finger that writes just over my head. It’s been writing ever since I came here. Must be a bookful by now.”

“It’s got no business making such a scratchy noise. I don’t like it. And you dream up here—queer dreams like the boat you saw sailing before mother died.”

“I didn’t tell it before breakfast.”

“No, but you dreamed it and I’m going downstairs.”

"We can't sleep in the bed. Father said so. What mother had might be ketching."

"He sleeps there."

"Yep, on top with his clothes on. But we must mind. After winter's gone we can't ketch anything. Let's lay in front of the fire. I'll carry the cover down."

"All right. The deerskin and the quilt and plenty of wood will keep us warm."

So Sarah and Abe and the kitten curled up under the deerskin before the fire. When they had kept still a few minutes Abe said, "I can almost hear her singing."

"What?" Sarah whispered.

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps on the sea
And rides upon the storm."

Tain't nothing to worry about, Sarah. God's riding the storm all about here to-night. He won't let nothing get us."

"I'm glad, and it's real nice here under the cover," and Sarah kissed her kitten good-night.

After the children had gone to sleep Tige moved over and curled close beside Abe's back, and so they slept safe and sound through the stormy night.

CHAPTER XXI

“WE'RE AWFUL RICH!”

WITH the return of spring happiness came again to little Abe and Sarah. The cardinal, who had been gone a long time, returned and sang the same glad song, while the bird chorus in the roof of the roost was louder and happier than ever.

In the woods and on the sunny slopes flowers blossomed and the red and white cow went down in the thicket and found the cutest little calf the children had ever seen. It could hardly stand on its wobbly legs when they first saw it, but in a few days it could gallop around and its mother talked to it in soft, low “moos.” They had plenty of milk now and both Sarah and the kitten liked potatoes when there was milk to put on them.

When springtime had changed to summer there were berries to pick, fat juicy blackberries and plump blueberries, and Mr. Lincoln brought a couple of new hens home so the children could have an egg now and then. Topknot's late fall chicken had never grown very big. For some reason the hens did not like him and when he tried to be friendly they chased him. Still he seemed to enjoy having

them there and strutted proudly around, flapping his wings and trying to crow.

Pigeon Creek was lovely. Its waters were clear and full of music as they dashed and bubbled over the stones, and in its holes, which looked almost as blue as the sky, there were fine fish.

When Mr. Lincoln was home Abe did not have much time for anything but work. But when his father went away he took long rests in the roost, thinking of many things. The boughs that made the roof over his head were longer and thicker than the summer before and Abe thought everything he could see from his high place was larger and more beautiful than ever.

But the lovely summer came to an end. The trees dropped their leaves. The creek ran low with a far-away sound as if it were going somewhere never to return, and there was a sadness in the way the breeze blew, as if it wanted something and could not tell what.

One day Abe saw a long line moving against the sky—moving like a great letter “V” spread wide apart. As it came nearer he heard the cackle of geese—hundreds of them—talking in their fashion at the same time. He saw that in the front of the wedge-shaped lines one bird flew, all the others following. When the leader turned, the lines turned.

Abe watched the fluttering, moving line until it lost itself against the blue and white sky.

That night Thomas Lincoln was home and Abe told him about the moving line he had seen and asked some questions. Mr. Lincoln knew something of the habits of ducks and geese, how they go south when the waters of the North turn to ice, always following a leader.

"How do they pick him out?" Abe asked about the leader.

"That's something I don't know."

"Maybe he picks himself out and just starts right out leading."

"That's about the way of it. But their flying tells about the weather. We're going to have a cold winter and early cold at that."

"Another winter with our mother gone!" Sarah exclaimed. "Every night last winter I wished I was dead!"

"Poor little thing," Thomas Lincoln said, blowing his pipe smoke into the fire. "Poor children!"

"And I wished I could choke to death on a potato, and I nearly did. I want to go back to Kentucky," and Sarah's voice was unsteady.

"Back to Kentucky?"

"Yes I do. I don't want to stay here another winter. Winter's awful without any

mother. Summer's like something alive. The birds and the leaves and the creek talk. But in winter nothing's alive but wolves and the north wind."

"Maybe you won't have to stay alone this winter," her father said, patting Sarah on the shoulder. "We'll see."

Not long after this Mr. Lincoln started away on horseback. He said he was going to Kentucky on business of importance.*

Before he returned the first cold snap came and Sarah and Abe shivered in their poor summer clothing. They took their last winter's clothing from the wooden pegs where the garments had hung all summer and tried them on. Sarah had grown until her worn dress was much too small. Abe had grown taller than Sarah. When he put his skin breeches on, instead of covering him to the ankles, his skinny legs were left uncovered almost to the knees. The moccasins of the winter before were also too small and Abe's cap was torn. Two more pitiful and neglected children would have been hard to find.

Abe had prepared for winter by getting plenty of wood piled up and intended to go on with his studying, though he did wish with all his heart he could have some other kind of a book than the Bible.

* See note 14.

One day while Abe was at the spring and Sarah was scouring the three-legged black bake oven, a sound not made by water or birds or wind or animal was heard. It came to Sarah's ears first. She stopped scraping and listened. She pushed the pot aside, ran to the door, listened again and then shouted to her brother.

"Abe! Something's coming! Listen!"

Abe put his pail of water on the step and turned his ear in the direction from which the sound came.

"Yes," he said. "It's wagon wheels gritting over the stones at the upper ford."

"Is it coming here?"

"Tain't no place else for it to go."

The heavy rumbling ceased a few moments later and the children knew the wagon was pulling across the sandy stretch that lay beyond the creek and the dim wood road to the cabin. They watched in breathless excitement to see what was coming.

Presently they saw emerging from under the trees a large wagon drawn by two stout horses. It was piled high with boxes and bundles. A man drove the horses and a woman and two children sat on top of a roll of bedding. Mr. Lincoln rode at the side of the wagon, holding a small girl in front of him.

Sarah and Abe gazed for a moment, too surprised to move. Then they scurried around the cabin to their mother's big pine tree, from which place they could watch unseen.

The wagon stopped in front of the cabin. Thomas Lincoln sprang from his horse, put the little girl down and assisted the lady from the wagon. There was a girl larger than Sarah and a boy a little taller than Abe, and all these people went into the cabin.

A moment later Mr. Lincoln came out and, with the man who had driven the team, began unloading the wagon.

There were rolls of quilts and blankets and clean coverlets and there were real feather beds. There was a spinning wheel and several chairs. There was a sure-enough wooden bed with posts and, most wonderful of all, there was a bureau with handles on the drawers. There were lots of pots and pans, several barrels and three or four boxes, all of which were unloaded and taken into the cabin.*

"Did you ever see so much fine things in all your life?" Sarah asked when she dared speak.

"Somebody must be awful rich," Abe answered.

* See note 15.

"What have those folks come here for—to take our house?"

"Maybe father's sold out."

"And we'll go back to Kentuck?"

"Most likely I'll have to chop logs for another house still farther away from Kentuck."

Just then they heard their father calling, "Abe! Sarah!"

When the two children timidly entered the cabin Abe's father said to the lady, "Here they are. This is Sarah and this is Abe—Abraham Lincoln."

"You poor children!" the lady exclaimed, and even before they had time to see what she looked like, she caught them in her arms and kissed them, saying again, "You poor children."

Too much amazed to speak, Sarah and Abe could only stare.

The lady laughed. Her laugh sounded good and she said, "Tell them who I am, Thomas."

"I done got you a new mother," Mr. Lincoln said. "This is her. These here children are your new sisters and brother. The boy is named John Johnson. The girl here is Sallie Johnson and the other—where is she?" and Mr. Lincoln looked around for the little one.

Abe turned his eyes to the small girl who was hiding in her mother's skirt. She had blue eyes, pink cheeks and golden curls, and

Abe thought he had never seen anything so pretty in his life.

The new mother said, "This is my baby. Her name is Tildy. Tildy, go see your new brother. His name is Abe." But Tildy twisted herself up in her mother's skirt and hid.

The new children were dressed in clean, strong garments of linsey-woolsey, and they wore shoes.

"Sallie," the new Mrs. Lincoln said, "get that dress of yours out of the bureau drawer and run a hem in it right quick. And John, in the next drawer is that other suit of yours. Give it to Abraham."

When the suit was handed to him, Abe could only stare, for he had never worn such nice clothes.

"Don't stand there like a bump on a log," Mr. Lincoln exclaimed. "Take it. Go to the barn and put it on."

When Abe came from the barn he was dressed in a whole suit, faded somewhat and patched. But for a boy who had never worn any kind of breeches but deerskin, it was most elegant and he hardly knew who he was.

And Sarah—he hardly knew Sarah in Sallie's clean, whole dress, and the brother and sister looked and looked at each other.

But there were other things to see. The change in the looks of the cabin was made al-

most as quickly as the change in the appearance of the children. The bed built of poles was knocked down and thrown on the kindling pile and the real bed was put up. Two of the feather beds were carried to the loft and two nice beds were made of them under the eaves.

Almost before the upstairs beds were made ready to sleep in, John and Sallie, who had been fixing them, were called to supper. The table had real dishes on it, enough for everybody to have one with a knife and a fork. The new mother had cooked food to eat as they journeyed from Kentucky and had plenty left for this first supper.

Tildy's bashfulness wore off before the meal had been finished and she grew funny as they all sat around the table. She made faces at the other children and then laughed until she nearly choked. When she laughed dimples came and Abe thought she was prettier than ever.

That night the three girls slept together and the two boys.

When Abe thought everybody had been asleep for a long time he heard his name.

"Abe, Abe," Sarah whispered. "You asleep?"

"Nope."

"Is your bed soft?"

"Soft as a big mouse nest."

“Mine’s soft as a bird’s nest, and softer too.”

“My bones ain’t used to it.”

“Abe! Abe!”

“What?”

“We’re awful, awful rich now, ain’t we?”

“Yep, and I’ve been thinking.”

“What?”

“When folks that’s as poor as we’ve been get rich they oughtn’t to get stuck up. We ain’t no better than we was before just because we got fine clothes and forks and things.”

“Abe.”

“What?”

“Will they let us keep them—the fine clothes?”

“I don’t know.”

“Let’s go to sleep right now so we can wake up early and get out with the clothes on before any of them ketches us—let’s do. Good-night!”

CHAPTER XXII

“TILDY, TELL THE TRUTH”

IF ABE and Sarah had been suddenly removed to some new world it would not have seemed stranger to them than the changes that took place about their cabin home in the first weeks after the new mother came.

When Abe was sure she was not looking he studied her. She was not slender and gentle like his own dear mother. She was straight and strong and very much alive and Abe did not know one woman could do as much work as she could. She laughed quite often, too, and Abe liked the sound of her laughter. It always made him think she got enough to eat. He liked to hear her talk, also, but he did not quite understand the way she talked to his father.

“Thomas,” she said, a few days after she came, “the cracks and chinks in this cabin must all be battled before winter.”

“Yes, I’ve been aiming to do it a long time.”

“Get at it to-morrow, Thomas.”

Abe looked at his father. The new mother had said “to-morrow” and said it as if she

meant it. Mr. Lincoln should have said, "After a while," or "Sometime," according to his way of agreeing to do work for his mother. But to his new wife he said, "All right—to-morrow."

Abe was much pleased when the work on the cabin began the very next day and Mr. Lincoln did not leave the place until it was finished. When it was done he asked the new Mrs. Lincoln if she would not like to have a wall cabinet to hold her knitting and thread and needles. She told him she would and would like it made of black walnut to match her bureau and bed.

Abe was not usually quick to offer to work. This time he told his father he would like to help make the wall cabinet. So they cut a walnut tree, chopped, split, smoothed, rubbed and polished until they had the pieces ready. Then they made hard little pegs with which to fasten the parts together.

Mrs. Lincoln was very much pleased with this gift and said she would keep it as long as she lived.

Abe began to feel he would really come to love the new mother, and after he heard her telling his father she was going to help him learn to read and write, he knew he loved her already.

The children were all in bed in the loft

and all asleep but Abe, the night he heard himself talked about. The long finger just over his head had been writing just as if it were writing about him or trying to tell him something. Sometimes he was sure he got the shape of a letter but he could never make out a whole word.

There were cracks in the floor, one of them almost under Abe's ear. His father and mother were talking and when he heard his name he forgot the writing over his head and listened.

"I don't believe in book larnin'," his father said. "It's ruined many a good man by making him lazy. It's got Abe already ruined. He's the laziest boy ever lived."

"Lazy?" the new mother said. "Seems to me he's the workingest boy ever lived. I never saw a boy that at his age can chop and split and plow and do a man's work like he can. Mine never did nor any other I ever knew about."

"He works—yes. But he don't like it. He likes to lay in front of the fire with the Bible. Once I thought he'd make a trapper. The woods bristles with good pay for the man that gets the furs. But he won't do it, he's that chicken-hearted. I thought he might take to carpentry, but that wall cabinet is the only thing he ever wanted to make unless it was

something to play with. I thought maybe he'd make a farmer, but he has to be driv to it."

"I don't know how as a boy ought to be blamed for not wanting to work. I haven't seen any grown men yet that was working cause they liked to *work*. I've been noticing Abe. I've never seen a human being so hungry for book learning. And I haven't ever seen a boy his age knows so much Bible. It's a sight. And what do you suppose he did last night? He got that old wooden shovel I threw out, scraped it clean and figgered on it. He can make good figgers too. Can you beat that? Abe's a peace-maker too. My John and Sallie never did get along any too well together. Only to-day they started up a row. Abe was there and got them made up in no time. That's twice he's done it. Now Thomas, we got to give Abe learning. The first school that comes to these parts—the *very first*, he's going. No telling what's in him. Wouldn't you be proud if he should get to be a sheriff some day, right here in Indianny?"

As Abe listened he felt a lump growing in his throat until it was so big it nearly choked him. But it was not a sorry lump that comes when a person wants to cry. It was a glad lump. Abe could have shouted with joy, and

with his two hands crossed over his heart he made a promise that he would be good to this new mother as long as she lived.

Abe liked the new children. John Johnson was a good, kind boy and Abe was glad he had come to live with them. Sallie was more like a stranger. She wore her dresses longer than Sarah did, twisted her hair in a knot and wore a tucking comb. She did not romp and play outdoors, but stayed in the cabin most of the time, helping her mother. Sarah said Sallie was trying to be a young lady.

But if Abe was slow getting acquainted with Sallie, Dennis Hanks was not. The first time he saw her she was trying to knit. He asked her to show him how it was done. She did not say anything, but when he laughed and sat down by her, her cheeks turned pink. Abe wondered why, and he wondered why Dennis kept looking at Sallie's hands and feet and ears instead of at the yarn if he wanted to learn to knit.

But of the three new children, Abe liked Tildy best, and after the first day she did not hide in her mother's skirt. She started her acquaintance with Abe by slipping up behind him, pulling his black hair and then yelling with laughter. After she had done this several times Abe caught her and made her talk to him. That night she moved her chair by

his when they were ready to eat and she would sit nowhere but beside him.

The next day she wanted Abe to play with her. He was clearing some new ground quite a distance from the house and had no time to play, but he promised he would bring her something nice when he came home at night.

Every morning the new mother fixed a lunch for little Abe, who, with his axe over his shoulder, entered the woods and, following an old deer trail, came to the place of his work.

At night when he came home Tildy ran to meet him and he told her what he had seen that day. One day he found a squirrel house with piles of empty shells, from which the furry fellows had eaten good dinners. He told her squirrels could eat in the winter because they worked hard and carried nuts into their houses. Another day he told Tildy about a spreading adder he found and he told her about a bear he saw looking at him through the leaves.

There was always something to tell about and Tildy came to think Abe worked in fairyland and she wanted to go with him. She promised to help him chop trees and split rails and grub roots. She begged and she cried, but her mother said she could not go.

One day after Abe had left Tildy crying to go with him, as he hurried along the quiet

trail through the woods, he felt something suddenly pounce on his back.* He had not heard anything coming, but to be pounced on gave him a start and he nearly fell to the ground under the weight. Instead of a growl coming from the animal on his back, however, there came a laugh.

When he straightened up Tildy was hanging to him with her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist, for Tildy could jump like a cat and had followed Abe, making no more noise than a cat.

But Tildy's disobedience was to find her out. The axe Abe held in his hand turned as he was pounced upon, and when Tildy slipped off as quickly as she had sprung on him, her foot struck the sharp edge of the axe.

Her laughter was now turned to terrible howls of pain and fright as she saw her foot turning red from the blood which ran from it.

Abe was frightened, too, but he knew something must be done, and, jerking his shirt from his breeches, he tore a strip off its long tail, which he bound around Tildy's foot so that it could not bleed any more. He then took her on his back and turned towards home.

“What you going to tell your mother when she asks you what did it?” he asked.

“That I cut it with the axe.”

* See note 16.

“But that will be only part of the truth. You must tell all about it.”

“I’ll not! I’ll *not!*” she sobbed. “She’ll spank me half to death for coming.”

“No she won’t. She’ll be so glad you didn’t cut your whole foot off she’ll forget about the spanking. You must tell the truth, Tildy. Will you promise?”

“Yes, I’ll *promise*, but I’m not going to do it. I’m going to tell her a rat bit me.”

“Oh, Tildy,” Abe said, laughing, “don’t tell such a silly lie as that. Tell the truth.”

“I’ll play dead,” Tildy said, dropping her head on Abe’s shoulder. “Then I can’t tell nothing.”

Abe wondered if there was any way Tildy could be made to tell her mother the truth.

CHAPTER XXIII

NOAH'S ARK

ONE summer evening as Abe lay stretched out under the green roof of the roost, Tildy came climbing up to see him. She did not want to watch the red sky turn purple and gray. She did not want to watch the evening birds as they darted about getting their supper, or perhaps it was their breakfast, as they were just up. She wanted Abe to tell her a story about Noah's Ark and the animals that went into it and why they did not eat each other up.

"A cow wouldn't want to eat another animal," Abe said.

"No. But wolves and bears would eat a cow. Why didn't they when they were all shut up in the ark together?"

"When I see Noah I'll ask him," Abe said, and for giving Tildy this kind of an answer he got slapped. Then she climbed on him and told him if he did not promise to make her a Noah's Ark she would roll him off the edge of the roost.

Abe caught Tildy's dimpled hands in one of his strong ones, her feet in the other, and

told her he guessed he had better pitch her off first. When she thought he might do this she told him she wouldn't hurt him, but if he would build her a Noah's Ark she would let him carry her "handk'cher" to meeting, the first time he went. Abe had not known before that Tildy possessed a handkerchief, but he promised to make her a Noah's Ark the very next morning.

Before sunrise the following day Abe was out behind the cabin making something and Tildy was watching him and asking all sorts of funny questions. Dennis Hanks came by just after the sun had cleared the low pine hill.

"What's that crazy thing you're making?" he asked of Abe.

"It's a Nose Ark," Tildy said, clapping her hands.

"What kind of a 'nose' did you say?" and Dennis held his ear toward Tildy's face.

"Nose," she said, hitting at him. "Your big ears must be stopped up. I didn't say 'nose'; I said 'Nose Ark.'"

"Don't get her all riled up," Abe said to Dennis. "We're making a Noah's Ark."

Dennis leaned against a tree and laughed. He laughed good and long, glancing toward the back door of the cabin as he did so. Then he said in a loud tone, "I'm glad I don't need

toys like that to take my time," and again he cast his eyes toward the door.

"She's not up yet," Abe said.

"Who?" and Dennis tried to look as if he did not know what Abe meant.

"You wasn't slicking your hair and washing your feet when just me and Sarah lived here."

Dennis laughed again and came close to the ark to take a better look.

"Don't you touch it," Tildy exclaimed, "and don't laugh so loud and bawly like. We're going to find the animals while Abe's working and have them ready when he gets home and you'll scare them all away."

"Animals?" Dennis said. "Animals going in *that* thing?"

"Yes, thousands of them," Tildy promptly answered.

"I'd like to see it done."

"Well, you can't. You laugh too roary like. The animals would all hide."

"You'll let me see how it's done if I laugh like a fish, won't you?"

"Dennis don't know peas in the pot," Tildy said to Abe. "He wants to laugh like a fish."

"He'll have to get under water to do it."

"I hope he drowns his laugh dead."

"Don't you like the way I laugh?" Dennis asked, pulling one of Tildy's curls.

"No I don't, you old buzzard," she cried, pulling away from him.

"Then I'll cry next time I come. What time does Sallie get up?"

"Ask her," and Tildy pointed toward the cabin door. Dennis looked just in time to see Sallie turn back into the house.

"Why didn't you ask her?" Abe questioned.

"I ain't got nothing to say to her," Dennis answered, grinning.

While the boys were away at work Tildy and Sarah caught the animals that were to go into the ark. The collection was made up of a lizard, a big beetle, a very small turtle, two fat worms, a devil's horse, a toad, a grasshopper, a caterpillar, a spider, a fly, and a butterfly.

It took them all day to get these animals together, for half they caught escaped and they had to search again.

When Abe reached home that evening he found the girls waiting and the ark at the edge of the water.

"Here's the 'Nose Ark' animals" Tildy shouted, pointing to a collection of jars and cups.

"What's this?" Abe asked, peeping at a lizard.

"I think it ought to be a wildcat," Sarah said, "because it creeps along without making any noise and has a fierce mouth. Tildy thinks it ought to be a cow because it switches its tail."

"Why don't you have it for a snake?"

"We've got two worms for snakes, one green and one striped."

"This piller-cat is a bear," Tildy said, poking a fuzzy caterpillar.

"She always says 'piller-cat,'" Sarah said, tilting her nose. "But isn't he nice and furry, just like a baby bear?"

"What's this grasshopper?" and Abe peeped in a jar.

"That's the deer. He bounds along on his tall legs."

"But he's *green*," and Abe laughed.

"God loves green deer just the same as any other kind, Abe Lincoln," said Tildy solemnly, "and he let green deer into the ark."

"All right," Abe answered, still laughing. "What's this big, black beetle?"

"That's the dog because it's black. The spider is a wolf and the fly is a pig. Wolves eat pigs, you know."

"This wolf can't eat this pig," Tildy said.

"He can't chase him 'cause I pinched his leg off."

"It's bad to hurt even a spider," Abe told her.

"He wouldn't stand still and he was going to bite me and I'm not bad. I'm a good little girl."

"Where is the horse?"

"Right here," and Sarah uncovered the little turtle. "He's a horse because when he starts he keeps going and gets there."

"Got any monkeys?"

"This might be a monkey," and Sarah pointed to the devil's horse, which was tied to a root with a long piece of grass.

"His eyes look like monkey's anyway and look in the jar where the green deer is. Did you see the lovely spotted butterfly? That's the dove that's going to be let out to find dry land."

"All right. Let's put them into the ark and get them started before the heavens open and the flood comes," said Abe.

While they were putting the strange collection of creatures into the queer little ark, Abe looked up and saw a hawk circling about above the cabin. The three hens and Top-knot's half-grown baby were picking about the door.

"The hawk's looking for his supper," Abe told Tildy, "but he can't find it here. Our chickens are too big for him to carry away."

Before he had finished speaking Abe saw the hawk make a sudden swoop downward. Quick as a flash it was done and the frantic squawking of a chicken told the success of the hawk's daring act.

"The hawk! The hawk!" Abe shouted. "He's got Topknot's baby."

In a moment the ark was forgotten and the unfastened animals left to escape. All the children thought of now was the chicken, whose pitiful cries could be heard, for the hawk was flying low.

His prey was almost too large and he had not fixed his talons very deep in the poor young rooster. This was why, a moment later, as the children screamed and clapped their hands, the chicken, kicking and squawking, fell to the ground.

Abe was the first to reach him. He found the feathered head covered with blood coming from one eye, which had been nearly torn out by the sharp claw. Something was the matter with one of the chicken's legs, too. He could not stand up.

Without hesitation Abe yanked his shirt-tail out and tore a strip from it.

“Abe Lincoln,” Tildy said gravely, “you better let your shirt-tail alone. You’ve pulled it off nearly up to the neck now and when it’s all gone you’ll be sticking out and get licked.”

“Plenty left,” Abe answered. “Let’s take the poor critter to the creek and wash his head. Then I’ll tie his eye up. He’s not tore up so bad he won’t get well.”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SNAKE BITE

ABE's father came home one afternoon carrying something in his hat, and, seating himself on the door-step, he called the children and asked them to guess what he covered with his hands.

"A hop-toad," Tildy shouted; "no, a bunny; no, a bird."

"Is it dead or alive?" Sarah asked.

"It's not dead," Mr. Lincoln answered.

"Then it's alive and we can't eat it till it's cooked," she said.

"I didn't say so," Mr. Lincoln laughed.

While Sarah and her father were talking, Tildy squeezed between Mr. Lincoln's knees and peeped between his fingers into the hat. As she did so, she gave a squeal of joy, saying, "I want some," starting into the hat with her eager fingers.

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" Mr. Lincoln said, holding the hat beyond her reach. "Everybody must have some. Hold out your hands, Sarah, you and Sallie and Tildy," and when they had made baskets of their hands he filled each one with the biggest, fattest, bluest blueberries the children had ever seen.

When the last berry had disappeared down their throats and the children had been told where Mr. Lincoln found them, they said they were going back for more.

But it was too late that day. The next morning, however, the three girls got ready to go for blueberries. It was John's turn to work in the field and Abe's job to split a pile of wood. Mrs. Lincoln was going to Gentryville on the mare and Mr. Lincoln was going off in the other direction.

The girls walked beside the horse along the shady road until they came to the turning-off place where Mr. Lincoln had told them the berries grew.

They had no trouble finding the berry patch, and the bushes were covered with the little blue-black balls that were so sweet. The girls picked and ate and rested under a tree. Then they picked and ate more berries. Every one of their three tongues was purple and Tildy's mouth was rimmed with purple almost to her ears.

With well-filled pails the girls started home, but stopped again just at the edge of the clearing, where they discovered a thicket of blackberries. Here the fruit hung in shining clusters like grapes and looked even juicier and sweeter than the blueberries had.

Sarah and Sallie decided to make a basket

of leaves and take home enough blackberries to make a pie.

Putting their pails down, they gathered some broad, tough oak leaves, which they fastened together with thorns from a haw tree. It did not take much longer to fill the basket than it had to make it, and Sallie was reaching for a last big bunch to put on top when she gave a terrible scream and jumped away from the bush. As she did so the leaves under the bushes rustled and Sarah saw a snake glide away.

"A snake! A snake!" she shouted. "Did it bite you, Sallie?"

Sallie had lifted her foot and was holding it in her hand.

"A snake? Yes—I'm snake-bit."

"Maybe it didn't bite you. Maybe it just slapped you with its tail," Sarah ventured.

"No, no! It bit me! I felt its teeth! It's burning my foot!"

"I didn't see it good," Sarah said. "Did you, Tildy?"

"Yes I did," she promptly answered.

"Was it pale brown with lightish spots sort of square-like?"

"Yes, that's the kind."

"Are you *sure* you saw it, Tildy?"

"Yes, I *did*. With both my eyes I saw it."

"And it was that kind of a snake?" and Sarah's face was grave.

"'Zactly like you said—*zactly*."

"That's a rattlesnake," and Sarah's voice quivered.

"Rattlesnake," Sallie screamed. "Then I'm poisoned. I'll die! Jim Green's dog back in Kentuck got bit by one and died. It had fits! It frothed at the mouth!"

"Does it hurt much?" Sarah half sobbed.

"It's killing me. Right now I feel the poison shooting up my leg."

Tildy began to cry.

"Let's hurry to the house," and Sarah took up the pails.

"I can't walk," Sallie groaned. "I'm getting ready to die right here in the bushes."

Tildy's moderate crying now turned into a shrill howl.

"You shut right up—shut right square up," Sarah commanded. "Abe's home. I've got to yell loud enough to make him hear and you've got to help. Let's call now—call as loud as you can."

So they called "Abe! Abe! Abe!" Over and over they called while Sallie sobbed and shivered.

It was not long before they heard Abe shouting "Who-o-o-o." That was the way

he called. They shouted again so he would know just where to find them.

"What's the matter?" he asked as he came running. Then his eye fell on Sallie, who was very pale, was shaking as if she had a chill and kept saying, "I'm dyin'. Take me home!"

"What's the matter?" Abe asked again.

"A rattlesnake bit her," Sarah answered.

"Gee!" he exclaimed. "Rattlesnake? Wish I'd brought my knife. But we'll be to the house in a minute. Get onto my back and hold tight and I'll fix you."

Sallie fell onto Abe's back. The load almost staggered the slender-bodied little boy until he gained the roadway, where it was easier to walk.

When he reached the cabin Abe slid Sallie onto the door-step, dropped on his knees, rubbed a clean spot on her foot and the next minute was sucking the affected spot for dear life while Sarah was getting the hunting knife to cut a hole where the snake's fang had gone into the flesh.

Frightened nearly to death, Sallie fell back on the floor gasping. "I'm dying dead," she said weakly, and her white face and closed eyes were pitiful to see.

"She's dead! She's dead!" Tildy cried and started running toward the roadway.

Neither Sarah nor Abe noticed her departure, and she had run quite a distance down the roadway when she met her mother. At sight of her she began screaming, "She's dead! She's dead!"

"Who's dead?" Mrs. Lincoln exclaimed, bringing her horse to a sudden stop.

"Sallie—she's dead! She got bit with a rattlesnake—a terrible long one with thousands of teeth."

"Come here!" Mrs. Lincoln commanded, and catching Tildy by the arm, she pulled her onto the horse, kicked its ribs and a few moments later came galloping up to the steps.

"Is she dead?" Mrs. Lincoln asked, her face almost as white as Sallie's.

"No'm," and Abe's homely face smiled all over. "It wasn't a snake bit her. It was a thorn. I found it by sucking and pulled it out with my teeth. It was a whopping big one—here it is." And Abe took it from the step and handed it to Mrs. Lincoln.

"Now Tildy," her mother exclaimed, "you're going to get whipped. You do everything bad and escape just because you're the littlest one. But lying is something I can't stand."

"I didn't tell a lie!" Tildy shouted at her mother.

"Not tell a lie? You said Sallie was dead."

"It was Sallie told the lie. Sallie said she was dead. I didn't tell a lie!"

"Sallie thought she was dying," Abe said. "That's what Tildy's talking about."

"Poor child!" Mrs. Lincoln said, kneeling by Sallie.

Sallie put her arms around her mother's neck and sobbed, saying, "I thought I was snake-bit—until—Abe found the thorn."

"Don't be scared any more. You didn't get snake-bit and we've all had thorns in our feet."

Sallie was very white and could hardly walk when her mother helped her to the bed, and when she tried to hold a cup of water, her hand shook and she couldn't seem to drink the water.

"What makes her throw the water up?" Sarah asked.

"I guess her stomach got scared too," Mrs. Lincoln answered.

Abe watched Sallie for a while. "She's half dead," he said to himself, "and nothing bit her at all. A little more and she'd been scared stiff and sure enough dead—and a snake never touched her. I wonder how it is just thinking things makes them seem true."

This was such a hard question little Abe could not answer it.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ROBBERS

THE Lincolns were all sitting around the fire one night when Tildy began suddenly jumping up and down and screaming with all her might.

"What's the matter, Tildy?" everybody said.

But she kept jumping and screaming with tears running down her pink cheeks.

"Does something hurt you?" her mother asked.

Tildy kept jumping.

"Did you bite your tongue?"

But Tildy only jumped and screamed.

"Maybe she's got a bee in her clothes," Abe suggested.

"She's got the belly-ache, I reckon," Thomas Lincoln said.

But not a question would Tildy answer until her mother caught her, shook her soundly and said, "Tell me what's the matter with you or I'll turn you over my knee and spank you good."

"I lost my handk'cher," the little girl wailed.

"Lost your handkerchief? No, you haven't.

You haven't had your handkerchief since we left Kentuck."

Putting Tildy in a chair, her mother went to the bureau and opened a drawer. She found the corner where the handkerchief had been all rumpled and the treasure gone.

"Did you get it?" her mother asked.

"Yes."

"What for, Tildy?"

"To wave at Nose Ark when it sailed away."

"But haven't you been told never to get into the bureau drawers and especially not to touch that handkerchief?"

"I wanted to wave it at Nose Ark."

"Don't you know it's bad not to mind?"

"It says in the Bible to do it—God wants everybody to wave at Nose Ark."

Abe opened his eyes. He had never found in his Bible that God wanted people to wave at Noah's Ark.

"Well, if you didn't go anywhere with your handkerchief except to the ark Abe made, you'll find it in the morning," Mrs. Lincoln said.

"I'll help hunt," said Abe.

"I'll help, too," said John Johnson.

"I'll help, too," Sarah promised, and Sallie said, "I'll help, too."

When Dennis Hanks, who was staying all

night with the boys, heard that Sallie was going to help hunt the lost handkerchief, he said he would help with the rest of them.

Tildy had rubbed her eyes with her fists until there were brown rings around them. Noticing this, Dennis looked straight at her and said, "Who-o? Who-o? Who's an owl?" and everybody laughed.

"Don't you call me an owl!" Tildy cried, angrily doubling her fists. But before she had started after Dennis her mother caught the little girl in her arms, wiped her face clean on the corner of her apron and Tildy was soon after fast asleep.

"I don't believe in letting small children have handkerchiefs," Thomas Lincoln said. "I've raised two that never owned a handkerchief. I don't think much of them for young people."

"I don't think children need them myself and it's foolish to spend money such a way. But it almost couldn't be helped with Tildy. I had to take her to meeting with me always. Sister Binah Stone sat next to me. She was never without a big handkerchief. Along toward the last of the service she always got to weeping. When her handkerchief was wept wet she would shake it out and joyfully shout, 'Weep and be glad!' Tildy learned to do the same way, but she couldn't 'weep and

be glad' without a handkerchief. So I got her one. I never let her carry it except to meeting. I thought I'd keep it nice 'til she was grown up."

"I suppose handkerchiefs is all right for religious purposes," Thomas Lincoln said thoughtfully, "but they're calculated to stir up pride if used every day."

The next morning the searchers went out in full force to hunt for Tildy's handkerchief. Abe and Sarah and John walked and walked and looked and looked. Dennis and Sallie, after looking behind a few logs, stopped at the creek, where he skipped stones. When one dipped the water, it was as if it had touched Sallie's funny bone, she giggled so easily.

But the searchers found no handkerchief. What could have gone with it? This was the question. There must be robbers on the place. But who or what kind were they? Nobody had been there. It was a mystery.

Several weeks went by and nothing was seen of Tildy's handkerchief until one day Abe and John and the two girls went out to play Robinson Crusoe. Abe had never forgotten the story as it had been told him by the miller's mother. He told it to John and suggested they act the parts.

John said there were no "wimmin" in

Robinson Crusoe and if they tried to put Tildy in no telling what she would do.

But Abe said, "If there had been wimmin wrecked with Robinson he would not have been mean enough to leave them out. Sarah and Tildy is the same as wrecked living out here where they don't never see nobody. Besides, somebody will have to be the dog and the goat.

John said he was going to be Robinson. Tildy said he was not for she intended to be Robinson. Abe finally made Tildy think she would have more fun being the goat, which she decided to be so she could butt everybody. Sarah was to be the dog and Abe was to be Friday.

At no great distance up the creek-shore there was a sandy place back of which was a little hill with big stones around its foot. Robinson and his family were to live on the hill and see the cannibals feasting on the sand.

Abe was on the ground in front of the big stones, creeping to a place from which he could get a good view of the cannibals, when he heard a faint little "Squeak, squeak."

He listened, not knowing just where it came from, until he discovered a hole leading back somewhere. Pulling a stone aside, he came upon a little cave-like place that was the wonderful storehouse of some animal.

Calling the others, he told them to peep in.

"I see Topknot's feathers, sure as I live, I do!" Sarah said. "What lives in here?"

"Nothing big enough to kill Topknot. But let's take the stuff out and see what's here."

First they drew out a long piece of snake skin, thin as a veil, stiff and marked with checks and lines like a real snake. Then came an owl's beak and eyes.

"What eat him up?" Tildy asked with wide-open eyes.

"This is a wood rat's storehouse, I think," Abe said. "The wood rat did not kill the owl. Something else did and the rat dragged in what was left."

When the children had cleaned out the storehouse, there was a big pile of rat treasure. There were acorns and dried berries, grasses and toadstools, long bean-shaped pods and porcupine quills. There were nuts and grasses and bits of root and the teeth of a squirrel and dozens of other treasures.

Back of it all Abe caught sight of something white. He pulled. It did not come easy. He pulled again and heard the "Squeak, squeak" he had heard at first.

"I must pull easy," he said to Sarah. "I believe there's some kind of babies back in here."

After pulling gently for several minutes

the white thing came toward him—a nest it was, softly lined with milkweed silk, and the white thing it was in was Tildy's handkerchief.

"My handk'cher!" Tildy shouted as it came into view, and she grabbed it by the corner.

As she did so a mother rat with two little ones holding to the fur of her under side jumped from the nest to a log and vanished through a hole.

"I wish we hadn't tore up the nest," Sarah said as its silky lining was moved about by the breeze.

"Let's put their stuff all back in for them," Abe said. "They worked hard to get it together and it ain't going to do us no good to leave it out."

This suggestion suited both Sarah and John. So they put the rat's treasure store back in the little cave and covered it with the stone.

But Tildy was so glad to get her lost treasure she never thought of the nest again, and that night while they sat around the fire she showed them how sister Binah Stone "weaped" and shouted and they were glad she had found her handk'cher.

CHAPTER XXVI

SOFT SOAP AND COLORS

LINCOLN'S ash hopper was built at one side of the cabin and into it the ashes from the fireplace were put over winter.

While the nice, soft wood ashes were being saved in the hopper, all kinds of fat scraps were being saved in a barrel, for ashes and fat made their soap.

When soap-making time came, water was poured on the ashes in the hopper. Running through them, it dripped out the bottom in the form of lye. This lye was put in a big black kettle in the yard, the fat scraps poured in, and the mixture boiled until it was a nice brown soap.

It was then put in a barrel and used for washing everything, hands and faces as well as dishes and clothing, for the Lincoln children had never heard of such an article as a cake of sweet-smelling, hard soap.

Lincoln's soap barrel was a good tight one with a round cover over it and above this a little roof so that no water could get into the soap.

Nobody thought of wasting soft soap, but Tildy was always wanting to stir it with a long stick and see it go round and round. Her mother had caught her at the barrel several times, had slapped her hands, and finally promised her the next time she bothered the soap she would be spanked.

Tildy promised that never again would she bother the soap and she kept her promise until the day she made three kinds of mud pies out by the woodpile. Sarah helped her and the pies were fat and beautiful. Some of them had little seeds sprinkled over the top; some had white sand. For the others she had found no top trimming, and she wanted them to be especially nice for these were to be Abe's pies.

It was getting time for him to come and she kept thinking how good a pie would look with soft soap spread over the top. It was the nicest, stickiest stuff she knew anything about—the very spread for the top of a rich pie.

After thinking of soft soap for a time Tildy began looking toward the soap barrel. She could see the gourd with which the soap was dipped out lying across the board on the barrel-top. Nobody was around. In a hurry to get her pies finished before Abe came, she ran

to the barrel, dipped the gourd in and hurried back to her pies with just enough soap for the last three of them.

Abe had come while she was gone and was admiring her row of pies.

When Sarah saw what Tildy had she said, "Oh Tildy! You said you'd never get into the soap again. You're a bad girl."

"I'm not bad."

"You *are* bad. You don't mind your mother. I always minded my mother when she was here."

"I *do* mind my mother!"

"But you said you wouldn't get into the soap."

"I didn't get into the soap," she shouted.

"You did. You have it in your hand right now!"

"I haven't! I didn't! I ain't bad!"

"You're going to get spanked sure as your name is Tildy, for I'm going to tell on you."

"If you do—if you do—I'll eat you up when you go to sleep to-night. I'll eat you up and lick your bones! I didn't get the soap. I let it alone!" Her eyes were blazing and her cheeks were red.

"But Tildy," Abe said, "you mustn't tell a lie. You have the soap in your hand this very minute."

"I haven't," and as she spoke Tildy flung the dipper at Abe's head.

It struck him in the forehead and spattered soap in his black hair and over his face.

"*Now* you've done it!" Sarah shouted. "Now you *will* get spanked. You've put Abe's eyes out!"

With a cry of fright and sorrow for putting Abe's eyes out, Tildy threw herself on the ground and sobbed and howled by turns.

"You needn't bawl. I'm going to tell on you," and Sarah made ready to go to the cabin.

"Wait a minute, Sarah," Abe said. Then to Tildy, "Shut up your howling a minute. The soap did not get in my eyes—not much of it. Come on and wash my face and I'll not tell on you."

Tildy stopped crying.

"I'll tell," Sarah said firmly.

"No you won't, Sarah. God doesn't love a tattle-tale any better than He does a liar. The soap's not wasted. I needed a good scrub. Tildy won't get into the soap again. Take hold of my hand, Tildy, and lead me to the water. I can't see good."

Tildy took one of Abe's hands and Sarah the other and the girls led him to the creek.

Before he had finished washing John came and washed for supper.

As it was not quite time to eat, the children all climbed into the roost.

"Let's choose colors," Abe said as his eyes turned to the pink and blue sky which showed in spots between the green tree branches. "Tildy ought to have pink like her cheeks."

"Crazy!" exclaimed Sarah. "Her cheeks are not *pink*. Her cheeks are red, exactly red like the winter apples the miller's mother used to give us."

"Red then for Tildy. What will you have, John?"

"I'll have yellow. It's the biggest and best of all the colors. The sun is yellow. Gold money is yellow. Butter is yellow and so are pumpkins that make good pies."

"Sarah is next. What's your color, Sarah?"

"I'll have blue like the sky. It makes me think of heaven, where my mother is."

"Red, blue, and yellow," John said, laughing. "There's nothing left for Abe but green. Abe's green."

"Yep!"

"Green as the grass that makes the goose."

"Green's the very color I wanted because

it *does* make the goose," Abe said. "Green is the father and mother of all the other colors. The pink of the rose and the red of the apple were green first—in the bud. Corn and pumpkins and yellow flowers were all green first. God made ten times more green than anything else. That's a sign He thinks it's the best color."

"Heaven's not green," Sarah said.

"What color is it?"

"Above the blue it's white and shining."

"The emerald rainbow over the throne beyond the Crystal Sea is green. Don't you remember, Sarah? Green is the sign of life."

"Juicy and green," John said, pointing at Abe.

"Better be juicy and green and have the cow eat you and turn you into milk than to dry up and rattle in the winter wind. Green is the best color there is, for green things *grow*—they *grow*! Hurrah for green," and Abe clapped his hands.

"How'll you trade green for yellow?" John asked.

"Won't trade."

"I'm going to be green myself, Abe Lincoln," Tildy announced.

"You took red."

“I won’t be red. I’ll be green, and if you don’t let me I’ll fight you.”

Abe and John laughed. Abe said, “All right, you can be little green and I’ll be big green. Then we’ll be kin to each other and to everything else, for if I’m green I’m brother to the trees.”

“Shucks—how silly!” John said.

“Why silly? I reckon if God’s breath is my life it’s the life of the tree, too. Don’t that make us kin?”

“Blood kin?” asked Sarah.

Abe thought a moment before replying, “Sap kin, I reckon.”

CHAPTER XXVII

RED AND BLACK AND WHITE

DENNIS HANKS, John Johnson, and Abe were sitting on a log down by the stream scraping scales from fish they had caught for supper.

"Indians used to fish along here," Abe said.

"How do you know?" asked John.

"I've found arrowheads near the bank."

"You don't ketch fish with arrowheads," Dennis said, laughing.

"Nope—but they show Indians were here."

"I wish I could kill an Indian," John Johnson said.

"What for?" Abe asked.

"Just to be killing. Don't you want to kill one?"

"Nope. What for?"

"You ought to be ashamed, Abe Lincoln," Dennis said. "An Indian killed your grandfather."

"Yep. His name was Abraham Lincoln."

"If an Indian had killed my grandfather I'd want to kill an Indian."

"My Uncle Mordecai killed one."

"Well, what if he did? You ought to kill another."

"My grandfather had already killed the other one."

"And you wouldn't kill an Indian if you got a chance?" Dennis again asked impatiently.

And Abe's answer was the question again, "What for?"

"Abe hasn't got no sense," John said. "Indians has killed more folks than his grandfather."

"They were here first," Abe answered. "If you were in a place first and all your living was in the woods and creeks, would you want a lot of white men to come with guns and chase you away?"

"No. But I'm white."

"You didn't make yourself white, though, and I don't know as color has anything to do with the way folks ought to act."

"God made red men to be killed same as he did deer and wolves and wildcats," John gave as his opinion.

"And God made black ones to be slaves," Dennis added.

"Black folks never was treated right, either." It was Abe said this.

"Where did they come from in the first place?" John asked.

"The miller said white men got in boats, went off where the black ones lived, tied them tight, fetched them back and sold them for slaves. It was to make money it started, I reckon—same as the trapper killed a thousand little critters to get hides to buy whiskey and slaves."

"I believe in slaves," Dennis said. "I wish we had some. I'd never chop another tree."

"I believe in slaves, too," John admitted. "If we had slaves I'd knock that poky old mare in the head, hitch a pair of slaves to the plow, tell them how to do it and then sit by and see it was done that way."

"What would you do?" Abe asked.

"Prod them with a sharp stick if they got lazy and eat the bread after they got it baked. I wouldn't work."

"I don't want any slaves. I'd rather work myself."

"Who knew you liked work so well?"

"I don't. But it makes folks strong to work. I can swing an axe better than either of you."

"That's 'cause you do more of it."

"That's what I'm saying. My arms and legs ain't much on looks. But there ain't none better, I reckon, when it comes to doing their duty."

"It must be fine to be a slave-owner," Dennis observed, casting his eye toward the cabin. Sallie, well over her snake-bite fright, was in the house trying to spin as Dennis came by. She had not looked at him. He wondered if she knew he was there.

"I'd just as soon be a slave as to own slaves. Everybody ought to work for his own bread."

"Abe's crazy as a loon," and as he spoke Dennis turned his eyes again to the cabin.

"Yes, he's crazy," John agreed. But he was watching something by the edge of the creek and not thinking of Abe. Leaving his fish, he moved closer to the water.

"What is it?" Abe asked.

"I think there's a bee tree not far away. I've seen the bees coming for water. Let's watch this one take the line."

The boys watched closely. A moment later the bee rose and started away in a straight line.

"He's flying low—it's near here," John said. "Let's chase him."

Dennis said he would stay and finish the fish. So John and Abe started out after the bee. Within ten minutes Dennis heard them holloing.

"Bring the axe," they shouted, "and the little tub. Tell Sarah to bring a bucket."

When Tildy heard Sarah was going with the boys after honey, she said she would go, too. So her mother gave her a gourd dipper to help carry the honey home in.

It did not take the boys long to cut the tree and open it over the place where the honey was. There was lots of honey, which was dipped from the hollow of the tree into the tub and the bucket. The gourd was then wiped clean on the outside so Tildy could carry her portion of honey.

John and Dennis carried the little tub between them. Abe carried the bucket, Sarah the axe, and Tildy came behind with her gourd.

Before they reached the cabin Abe lifted the bucket to his head. This looked good to Tildy, so she lifted her gourd of honey to the top of her head and set it on her curls.

A moment later she was saying, "Ouch! Ouch! There's a worm crawling down my back. Get him off, Abe!"

Abe stepped behind Tildy. He laughed. The gourd was tilted sideways and a thick stream of honey had dribbled down one of her curls and was on its way down her back.

Abe straightened the gourd and told her there was no worm on her back. But when she reached the cabin her mother cried, "Oh

Tildy! How on earth will I ever get your hair cleaned. Sallie, take Tildy to the creek right away and duck her head in and scrub."

"I don't want to be ducked! I don't want to be scrubbed!" wailed Tildy.

"You shut right up or I'll stick your head in the water and keep it there," Sallie said.

"I won't go! I won't go! Sallie's going to drown me," and Tildy pulled away from Sallie and ran to Abe.

"Let me take her," he said to Mrs. Lincoln. To Tildy he said as they left the cabin. "You washed my hair all nice and good yesterday. I'll do you as nice to-day."

CHAPTER XXVIII

A DIRTY TRICK

LITTLE ABE loved animals but seldom had pets for long at a time. If he caught a rabbit, a squirrel, a bird, or a 'possum, he soon let it go. "The poor critters don't like to be locked up any better than the rest of us," he would say, and the next thing anybody knew of the pet, it had disappeared.

With dogs it was different. From the time he could remember, little Abe was fond of the dogs Thomas Lincoln kept about his place, and when he grew older he looked after them as if they had been people. If one of them got hurt Abe doctored and nursed it. If it was hungry and there was not enough bread for the boy and the dog, the dog got half the boy's share.

Once, when the Lincolns were moving, little Abe did a kind act for a dog which the thankful beast seemed to remember.

It was late in the fall and cold enough to freeze. The wagon, which was pulled by two oxen, was heavily loaded and Abe and the dog walked much of the way. There were no bridges and when the oxen reached a stream Abe climbed onto the wagon and the dog swam behind.

One of the streams they forded was frozen over. While the oxen were smashing through the ice, leaving a pathway of sharply broken edges behind, Abe could not hear anything but the noise of the breaking ice and splashing water. But as soon as the bank was reached he heard the dog whining.

"We've left the dog," Abe shouted to his father.

Thomas Lincoln stopped the oxen and looked back, saying, "Why doesn't he come on?"

"It's the ice that's keeping him back, I reckon," Abe said.

"He'll have to stay then. I wouldn't turn these oxen back across that creek for ten dogs. We can get another."

"But who will take care of him? He can't eat roots and nuts."

"He'll take up with somebody."

This did not satisfy Abe, and, climbing from the wagon, he rolled his breeches high on his skinny legs and, almost before Mr. Lincoln knew what he intended doing, the boy was in the icy water, wading to the shore where the dog whined.

"That dog will love Abe long as he lives," Sarah said to Tildy as they watched him from the top of the wagon. And if a dog could tell his joy and gratitude by jumping and bark-

ing and dancing and trying to lick a boy's hand, this dog told his thanks this way.

But there was one dog Abe never liked. It was a little yellow cur that came to Lincoln's cabin one day, nobody knew where from. Abe's father called it "Yellow Joe" and after it had hung around a couple of days he said it might stay. The reason Mr. Lincoln liked the dog was because it was always barking. No matter what stirred about the cabin or in the near-by woods, the quick ear of the small dog heard and gave warning.

The reason Mr. Lincoln liked "Yellow Joe" was the very reason neither Abe nor Dennis Hanks nor John Johnson liked him.

The boys had made plans several times to go 'possum hunting, but they had to slip away because Mr. Lincoln said if Abe hunted 'possums at night he wouldn't work well in the daytime.

Every time, just as they were ready to start, "Yellow Joe" set up such a vigorous barking Mr. Lincoln got up to learn what disturbed him.

"The onery little cur," Dennis said of the dog.

"He's a first-class tattle-tale," was John Johnson's opinion, "and Abe won't ketch a 'possum this winter."

But one time the boys got away. For some

reason the yellow dog did not bark. Perhaps it was because he wanted to go hunting with them, for after they had left the cabin he quietly followed.

There were several large dogs with the boys, one of them a strange dog that had followed Dennis from Gentryville.

The boys treed the 'possum, caught, killed, and skinned him.

Then John said, "Let's have some fun. Let's fasten this skin on Yellow Joe and see what he'll do."

So they caught Yellow Joe. He kicked and struggled and yelped when they put the skin around him, but he could not get away from three boys, who did not let him go until he was tightly fastened in the furry hide of the late 'possum.

With a yelp which seemed half gladness to be free and half fright at his new coat, Yellow Joe started running for dear life, his nose toward home.

Then something happened the boys had not expected. The dogs which had treed the 'possum thought they saw it making its escape into the woods and started in hot pursuit.

The boys followed the dogs, calling them back. But before they could catch them, they had caught and killed Yellow Joe.*

* See note 17.

When it was over Abe was sorry. "Poor Yellow Joe," he said, "that's the dirtiest trick we ever did."

"Good enough for him," said Dennis.

"Still it's dirty to do a dog that way. Suppose some great big giants was to ketch us, wrap us up in bearskins and throw us out where there was bear hunters and big dogs. Would you think that was right?"

"Poor Abe! When he gets to be a grown man with whiskers he's still going to be too chicken-hearted to kill a flea if he don't get over it. Human tattle-tales is bad enough. When it comes to dog tattle-tales, they ought to be killed," was Dennis' answer.

"I'm glad he's dead," John Johnson said, "but I'm sorry the dogs tore up the skin. It would have made a fine cap."

CHAPTER XXIX

AROUND THE FIRE

As ~~THE~~ chilly nights of autumn came, little Abe went out to gather pine knots. This was no easy job, for wood close around the cabin had been burned and he had to go farther and farther all the time for his supply. But he did not mind the work nor the heavy burden the wood made on his back for it was by the light of the fire he studied.*

Tildy helped Abe search for pine. Sometimes they found a place where the pine lay on the ground all burned black. In answer to her question as to how fire got away out there where nobody lived, Abe told Tildy fire runs faster than snakes or buffaloes when it gets started, and the start might come from the fire of an Indian or a camper, a long way off.

Some of the burned pine they found was in queer shapes. Once they came upon a burnt-out stump that looked exactly like a little black bear sitting on its hind legs with its paws hanging down. Sometimes they found pieces that had been forks of limbs, which looked like funny little dwarfs. The strangest form they found, however, was something

* See note 18.

that looked like a half-opened black water lily with a stem six inches long.

Abe looked at this quite a while.

"What made the black flower?" Tildy asked.

"It's the heart of a tree. The heart is hard. The fat in this did not burn as fast as the outside—there's a lot of it left. Feel how heavy it is."

"Let's take it home."

"Yep, we will. It will make a fire flower when it burns."

One night after the first frost, the Lincolns, except Mr. Lincoln, all sat around a bright fire. Dennis Hanks, who had come to stay all night, was with them. He sat on the opposite side of the fire from Sallie and did not speak to her. But when he said anything she giggled and this was as good as talking, for Sallie was a very pretty giggler.

"Let's tell stories," Sarah suggested.
"Let Dennis tell first."

"No, Abe first!" Tildy promptly corrected.

"You be nice now, Tildy," her mother said.
"Abe can tell second."

"I'm a good man. I'll tell a Bible story," Dennis said, scraping the floor with his feet and glancing toward Sallie.

"My story will be about David and the

lion. David was a good boy. One day when he was going through the woods he heard a terrible growl—a gr-gr-ow-ow-ll. He looked around and here come tearing along after him a great big lion. Everybody better watch out. It's coming—c-o-m-i-n-g. Its eyes is like fire! Its teeth is like the sharp point of hunting knives, and it's a-coming! And it's a-coming! Better watch out! Everybody better watch out! And David didn't have no club nor knife. So he knew it would grind his bones in its jaws, lap his blood with its tongue a yard long, and lick him up tooth and toenail. But the lion wasn't after David at all 'cause he was a good boy. The lion was roaring along after a little girl like Tildy. This lion had eaten sixteen little girls. He liked them. When they had curly hair he ate them in seven bites. Gr-gr-ow-ow-l-l-l! Wow! Lick 'em up. Watch out, he's coming!" and, dropping on his hands and knees with a horrible snarl and growl, Dennis started after Tildy.

The way she screamed frightened Sarah and even Sallie forgot to giggle as the big lion chased Tildy, until Mrs. Lincoln caught the screaming little girl into her lap and told Dennis to quit his foolishness.

"He didn't tell it right," Sarah said when

they had all laughed at Tildy. "David was strong like our Abe and killed the lion."

"How?" asked Tildy.

"Choked it, I guess."

"And poked its eyes out?" Tildy inquired with interest.

"I think David twisted the lion's whole head off," Abe said.

Tildy clapped her hands. Then she slid down from her mother's lap, moved on the tips of her toes beside Dennis, doubled her fist and hit him in the side of the head, saying, "You tell lies!"

"Ouch! Ouch!" exclaimed Dennis, and Sallie nearly fell off her stool, she laughed so hard.

"Let Abe tell about Moses in the bul-rushes," Sarah suggested.

"I don't want to hear about a bull. When he rushes I'll get scared and——"

"Yell your insides out," Dennis added.

"Tildy doesn't know what she's talking about," Sallie said.

"I do! There's a bull in Kentuck. He eats everybody up that wears a red shirt."

The children all laughed and Mrs. Lincoln said, "Tildy's mixed up on something she heard folks talking about one day at the store back home."

"I'm not mixed up," Tildy shouted, stepping before her mother and rubbing the front

of her plump little body. "I'm all smooth and in one piece!"

"You're a little old sausage full of pepper," Dennis said. "Ain't a sausage all mixed up?"

Tildy made a dash for Dennis, but Abe stopped her, saying, "Look, Tildy, here's your black flower. Let's see it turn into a fire flower."

Abe stood the hard, dark flower on its stem in the fire and a few moments later they were all admiring a wonderful flower, each petal of which was aflame. But the petals of this flower did not stand still like the lily petals on the pool. They jumped and danced as if alive and happy.

When the flower had almost burned out, Sarah said, "Where does fire come from?"

"It ketches," Tildy was quick to reply.

"Ketches? Well, don't I know that? Where does fire come from in the first place?"

"Somebody struck flint, I reckon," Abe said, "and the sparks fell in the grass."

As the last red of the fire flower turned black Tildy spied a bunny rabbit in the coals. She had hard work making the others see it and when they did only its ears remained. But everybody saw the row of little flames that ran across the top of the big black log. They looked like tiny fairies waving red cloaks about themselves.

"Maybe they're red angels," Tildy said.

"Angels are not red. They're white," Sarah was prompt to answer.

"Who said there wasn't any red angels?" Tildy asked.

"My mother told us angels are white and she knew all about angels."

"What do angels do all the time in heaven?" Abe asked.

"Play harps and comb their long hair." It was Sallie gave this information.

"Comb their hair?" Abe asked. "What for?"

"Abe Lincoln, don't you know? How would angels look with crowns on their heads if their hair wasn't nice and smooth?"

"I don't never, never, *never* want to be an angel!" Tildy exclaimed.

"You're a bad little girl, Tildy."

"I am not bad."

"Yes you are, for all good people want to be angels."

"I'm not bad. I'll bite the nose square off your head if you say that again, John Johnson."

"Tildy's not bad," Abe said. "I don't want to be an angel myself if all they do is play harps and comb their hair. But if they have schools in heaven and books, I'm going."

"I want to be a mother angel and rock a

baby in a cradle when I get to heaven," Sarah said.

"What do you want to be, Sallie?" Abe asked.

"A young lady angel," she replied timidly, fixing her tucking comb and smoothing her skirt across her knees.

"I don't know what all you angels will live on if there's not a few farmers in heaven." It was John who said this. "I'll be a farmer."

"I'm going to be a bird angel," Tildy announced. "I'm going to have red and blue and purple feathers and gold eyes. I'm going to sit in the trees and eat berries and if any angels throw sticks at me I'll peck their eyes out."

"You can't," Dennis said. "I'm going to be the story-teller and I'll scare you until you flop all your feathers out. Then you can't get into a tree and you'll starve or one of the angel's cats will get you."

Tildy began to cry and between sobs said, "I want—to—go to heaven and nasty Dennis Hanks will be there."

"Maybe he won't get in, Tildy," Abe said. "You know only good folks get to heaven."

Tildy stopped crying. She pointed her finger at Dennis and said gravely, "You won't be there. Only good folks like me and Abe gets in. Goody!"

CHAPTER XXX

SUNDAY BREAD AND SINNERS

A FEW evenings after Dennis Hanks had given his version of the Bible story of David, Mrs. Lincoln said she thought the children ought to learn something in the Bible by heart so they would be sure exactly what the Bible really told. She said she would bake a cake for the one who first learned the first psalm. It was not long—only six verses; it was full of good sense and every sort of a person could get good from it.

All the children but Tildy agreed to learn the psalm.

“I’m too little,” Tildy said, “to say a sam. Whoever gets the cake will give me some or he’ll be sorry.”

“‘He,’” Sarah repeated. “You must think one of the boys will get it. If one does it will be Abe.”

“Maybe Abe will work harder for the cake than any of the rest of you,” Mrs. Lincoln said.

Abe did not tell what he would do, but that night he was spelling words out of the Bible.*

* See note 19.

Over and over he spelled them and put them together. For a little while Sarah sat beside him repeating some of the words, but she soon grew tired and said when Abe learned it she would learn it from him and they would divide the cake. "You'll do it, won't you, Abe?"

"What?"

"Learn me the verses?"

"Yep."

"And me, too?" Tildy asked.

"Yep."

"More than anybody else?"

"Yep."

"Yep! yep! yep!" laughed John. "Why don't you let Abe alone? He doesn't know what you're asking him nohow."

Abe had a task that helped him learn and always remember the first psalm. Bread in the Lincoln home, as it was in all pioneer homes, was most always made of cornmeal. Wheat did not grow as well as corn and very little of it was planted. What did grow was gathered, tied into bundles, and put carefully away where rats and mice could not get it, that not a head might be lost.

When white flour was to be made, the grain heads were picked off and thrown into a big iron kettle or spread on some floor, where it was beaten with a flail. This beating broke the husk off the wheat and left the kernel,

which went to the bottom because it was heavier than the husk. As the beater threshed in this old-fashioned way he blew the chaff off the grain and the wind carried it away to be seen no more. The clean wheat kernel was then ground into white flour, which was highly prized and used only for Sunday-dinner bread or when company was entertained.

Thomas Lincoln had a small quantity of wheat, and it was Abe who did the threshing. After Mrs. Lincoln had promised the cake, as Abe beat the grain from which the flour was to come to make it, he said, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

Then he would stop to rest a little before trying the third verse, the words of which are, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

When it came time to blow the chaff, Abe would say, "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away," and he would blow and blow and watch the chaff scatter until it was all gone. When it was out of sight he would say the next verse, which told him what would happen to the ungodly because they were like chaff.

Over and over Abe said the verses and blew the chaff, and when the wheat was clean and ready to be ground into white flour, he knew the first psalm.

It was decided to eat Topknot's baby the Sunday they were to have white bread and a real cake for dinner. The hens had never liked the young rooster. After the hawk twisted his eye half out and hurt his leg he grew lop-sided and even the children did not like him. He did not even seem to enjoy himself, he was so crooked and blind, so Mrs. Lincoln said the best place for him was in the pot.

When she had picked the feathers off the rooster, Mrs. Lincoln held him up and said, "Look, Abe, did you ever see such a crooked chicken?"

"Slab-sided—but he was straight before the hawk got him."

"See," and Mrs. Lincoln held the chicken toward Abe, "one shoulder up, one down. One hip up, one down."

"He was always trying to get away from the blind side of hisself, I reckon," Abe observed, studying the picked fowl.

"He couldn't see but one way," Mrs. Lincoln said, "and I've seen folks just like him. Not in their skin and bones, but in their way of doing—they can't see but one way."

"Do souls get slab-sided?" Abe asked.

"I wouldn't wonder, only you can't see them. But a body ought to look on all sides of a thing."

"Like my father," Abe said. "When he was back in Kentuck he was a Free Will. Then he got to be a pre— pre——"

"Predestinarian."

"Yep—and now he's a Campbellite. I wonder what he'll be next."

"I'm not looking for him to budge from what he is now. He says Alexander Campbell is the greatest man in the world and everybody who fears God or ever lived in Kentuck ought to be a follower of his. I wouldn't call your father no single-eye man, but I think he's set now."

"If he was to find he was wrong he wouldn't stay set, would he?"

"When they're set as he is they can't never be made to see but what they're right, and a body just as well save their wind as try to argue with them."

When it came time to make the cake the children, even to Sallie and Abe, who came in from the wood-pile, gathered around Mrs. Lincoln to watch every step of the unusual procedure.

When the sugar and butter had been stirred together, Tildy, who had been keeping her eye on the delicious mixture, stuck her fingers

into the bowl as her mother turned to get the eggs to be used.

"Tildy!" cried Sarah and Sallie in the same breath, "get your hands out of the cake!"

"Tildy," Mrs. Lincoln said, "if you touch that cake bowl again you can't have even one taste of cake. But if you're a good little girl I'll let you lick the bowl."

"I'll lick," Tildy answered promptly, putting her hands behind her.

When the dough was ready, it was poured into a three-legged iron oven which was set by the fire. Coals were put on the lid of the oven and Mrs. Lincoln said she saw no reason why the cake should not be fine.

With the bowl between her legs Tildy sat on the floor. At first she rubbed her fingers around the bowl and licked them. But this was slow work. So she stuck her face itself into the bowl and licked and licked.

When she lifted her face from the bowl and Abe saw it he began laughing and said, "Better not keep near the fire too long. If all you got on your face bakes there you'll have a turtle face."

"I'm *not* a turtle!" Tildy was quick to say.

"No—you're not a turtle, but if dough bakes all over your face it will be like a shell, won't it?"

“Goodness sakes alive, Tildy!” Mrs. Lincoln exclaimed when she saw the smeared face. “You’ve got batter clear up into your hair. Sallie, take Tildy into the yard and wash her face.”

Tildy set up a wail as she generally did when face-washing time came, but Sallie took her out.

When Mrs. Lincoln looked in the bowl she laughed. “She got it pretty clean, didn’t she, Sarah? It won’t take much water to finish it.”

The cake baked a lovely golden brown in the iron oven. Topknot’s baby, who was made into a pot-pie, did not taste crooked and the gravy was splendid when the children sopped their white bread in it.

Mrs. Lincoln called this splendid dinner a “first psalm” party, but the only one present, though both Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were there, who could say the psalm through without making a mistake was little Abe.

CHAPTER XXXI

SCHOOL DAYS

“HURRAH! Hurrah! School! School!”*

Abe was so happy he could hardly believe it.

A teacher was coming into the neighborhood at Gentryville to teach a school, and Abe's father had said he could go. Sarah was going also and with them John. Sallie said she was too big for school—she had rather stay home and learn to sew and spin and quilt.

“I'm going to school, too,” Tildy announced when she heard the other children were going.

“You're too little to walk so far,” Sarah said. “It's miles and miles and *miles* to the school. We'll have to start just after daylight.”

“My legs are just as good to walk miles on as yours and Abe's are,” and Tildy pulled up her dress and stuck her chubby leg out.

“It's bones what counts in legs,” Abe said. “You ain't got the same kind of bones I have.”

“I'm not going to walk to school on my bones. I got as many legs as you have and I'm going to school.”

* See note 20.

“Your legs are all right, Tildy,” her mother said. “You have fine sturdy legs. But everybody keeps still in school. They don’t talk. If they do the teacher beats them with a rod. You never kept still one minute in your life unless you were into mischief.”

“I’ll keep still—still as a frog,” Tildy promised.

“Still as a frog?” Sarah repeated. “Frogs make more noise than any critter their size that ever lived. You can hear them croaking a mile.”

“I mean a dead frog,” Tildy was quick to correct. “You never heard a dead frog croak nor bark nor beller, did you? I’m going to keep still in school. I’m going.”

“I’ll try her,” Mrs. Lincoln said. “Maybe she’ll learn to keep still.”

“She’s such a little fighting cock,” Sarah said to Abe, “she’ll not get to go long.”

“She’s got to learn sometime,” Abe answered. “Everybody does.”

Schoolhouses where the Lincoln children lived were log cabins. Sometimes they had puncheon floors, sometimes no floors. Rough boards along the sides of the walls were the seats. There were no windows and very few children had any books.

The teacher of the school they were going to brought a small blackboard, a reader, a

blue-black spelling book and a copy of "The Kentucky Preceptor." This latter book told how to make speeches and hold debates on such subjects as, "Which is greater, the ant or the bee?" or "Which can move the biggest stones, water or wind?" Sometimes the teacher had a number book. More often he taught the children to count on their fingers.

The day school opened, Abe and Sarah were up long before daylight. Abe's thin, homely face was one big smile and he waited impatiently while Sarah combed her hair and braided it and Mrs. Lincoln curled Tildy's golden locks. Lunch was packed in a good-sized tin pail, and just after daylight the children started out, Tildy chattering like a magpie.

At school it was wonderful to Abe to be sitting on the board seat with a real teacher holding a long stick standing up in front.

When it came time to read, the children stood in a row before the teacher and the reading book was passed from one to the other, each pupil trying to read the same lines. Abe wished he could keep the book and look at it when it came into his hands, but of course he couldn't.

For the spelling lesson the teacher wrote a word out of the book on the blackboard and gave each child a chance to spell it. Then

he erased the word and gave it out again to find who could remember. He soon learned that Abe Lincoln could remember words well, and it was not a great while until Abe knew so many words he was allowed to stand in spelling matches with the larger boys and girls.

At recess and noon the boys and girls played games and ran about in the woods shouting. When Abe became well enough acquainted with the teacher, he asked if he might make figures on the blackboard at noon and when told he might, he was much pleased. After that he ate his lunch in a hurry and seldom played in the woods.

As Sarah had predicted, Tildy got into trouble on the very first day of school. A boy with a new suit on stood up where all the children could see him and said, "Who's the prettiest boy in school?"

"Abe Lincoln!" shouted Tildy.

"Abe Lincoln? He's the *homeliest* boy in school," and the children laughed at what the boy in the new suit said.

Tildy ran out in front of him and yelled again, "Abe Lincoln's the prettiest boy in school and don't you *dare* say he ain't."

"Who are you?" said the big boy, looking down on the small girl with red cheeks, blue eyes, and golden curls.

"I'm Tildy, and Abe's not the homeliest boy in school!"

"You must be blind, Tildy—blind in one eye and can't see out of the other," and again the children laughed.

"Blind? You call me blind when I got as much good eyes as you have, you nasty jay-bird?"

"How many good eyes you got, Miss Spit-fire?" the boy asked.

"Don't you sass me!" Tildy shouted with flushed face, "or I'll slap the face off you."

At this the boys and girls laughed louder than ever. This teased the big boy and he said, "Come on and do it."

"Get your face down where I can reach it," Tildy ordered, starting toward him.

But Abe caught her, saying, "Don't fight him, Tildy, you might hurt him."

"He called you the homeliest boy in school."

"What if I am. Food tastes as good to an ugly critter as a handsome one, and being homely don't keep me from spelling good."

Tildy pointed her finger at the big boy. Then, pushing the other across it at him, she said, "Shamie! Shamie! You don't know your spelling book, you big blockhead."

Sarah told on Tildy that night, and her

mother said she did not want to hear of anything like that happening again.

Tildy's next trouble at school was worse than the first because it was with the teacher himself, and it happened only a few days later.

"Somebody's whispering," the teacher said. "Who is it?"

Nobody held up a hand, and after a few moments of silence in the schoolroom the whispering was going again.

"Tildy," said the teacher sternly, "you're the one that's whispering. Come here."

Tildy was afraid of the man teacher with his long stick and did not move until he started toward her and told her a second time to come to him.

Her cheeks were flaming red and her eyes snapped as she walked before him.

"Put your hand out."

Instead of holding her hand out she stuck both hands behind her and made a face at the teacher, sticking her tongue out instead of her hand.

"Get your tongue back inside your mouth and stick your hand out," he ordered in a big, cross voice.

But Tildy would not put her hand out. So the teacher caught her arm, straightened it out and tried to pry her fingers out of her

closed fist. Not being able to do this, he beat her across the knuckles with his long stick, telling her she must not whisper in school.

With the first blow Tildy screamed and tried to get away, but the teacher held her. When he had given her a dozen blows he let go of her hand and had just started to tell her what a bad little girl she was, when she jumped away from him.

Before he could catch her she had turned around, crossed the room, jumped from the door and started home, yelling, "I'll tell on you, you nasty thing! I'll tell!"

The teacher was very angry at first. Then he said, "Does that little cat know the way home? Sarah, take her home and tell her mother *never* to let her come back."

So Tildy was taken home and never went back nor ever asked to. Sarah and Abe said they were glad of it.

"I reckon she's too little to get started on larning yet," Abe said, "but wasn't it awful what she did to the teacher?"

CHAPTER XXXII

ABE WHIPS A BULLY

IN MOST early-day schools there was a bully, who was generally the biggest, strongest boy among the pupils. He could beat any and all boys in the school and sometimes he could whip even the teacher.

There was such a bully in the school little Abe Lincoln went to, and every boy was afraid of him.

This young bully, whose name was Joe, had a hound—a thin, frightened dog that followed him about and would lie down and shiver with fear when yelled at.

One morning not long after school had begun, as Abe and Sarah neared the school-house they heard the pitiful howls and crying of a dog.

“I believe a wolf or a cat’s got a dog down,” Abe said.

“Maybe it’s a bear,” said Sarah, getting closer to her brother.

Running as fast as they could, they soon came to the cabin school. They did not need to go farther to find what was torturing the dog. Just on the other side of the playground the bully bent over his dog with a

hickory limb, with which he had beaten the poor animal until it could only whine and cry. Just as Abe came up the bully let another blow fall.

"Don't hit that dog again!" Abe shouted, running to its side.

The bully lifted the limb, looked at Abe and said angrily, "Who are you talking to? *Me?*"

"Yes, you—*you!* Don't lay the limb to that dog again. He's half dead now from your cruel beating."

The bully stood a moment too greatly surprised to speak. Then he shouted, "Whose dog is this?"

"It might be yours. It might be mine. It might be God's. Don't matter. Drop that limb!"

"Drop this limb? I'll do you the way I have the hound if you don't tend to your business—poor white trash!"

"Better do it first and tell about it afterwards," Abe said without budging an inch.

The bully started toward him with the hickory limb upraised. The skinny arms of little Abe grew hard and his fists went clinched.

While the dispute had been taking place the boys and girls had gathered and now began to shout, "Fight! Fight!"

The coming of the teacher, however, pre-

vented the fight at this time for he called, "School!" and they all had to go in.

But the bully knew he must now whip Abe or the children would think he could not. Abe was smaller than he, yet he did not like the way the little boy looked when, under the up-lifted limb, he refused to back up an inch.

The fight came a few days later at noon-time. One of the boys brought a turtle from the woods. The bully immediately took it and tried to make it stick its head out by knocking it against a tree and beating it on the back with a stick.

Not being able to force the creature's head out this way, he told the boys to gather some dry grass and start a fire. So twigs and bits of wood were put together and when there was a bed of coals they were put over the turtle's back.

Abe had stayed in school to practise writing "A. Lincoln" on the blackboard. He did not know what the boys were doing until he went out and saw the turtle covered with fire with the boys sitting like Indians in a circle around him.

Without stopping a minute to ask if he was wanted, Abe jumped inside the circle, took the turtle up and brushed the fire from its back.

"Put that turtle down!" the bully shouted.

Abe paid no attention. He was examining the turtle.

“You ugly, skinny, starved poor white trash—give me that turtle.”

“I may be ugly and skinny and starved—reckon I am. But if you think you can take this turtle, *try it.*”

As Abe said this the boys and the girls, too, clapped their hands and began to shout, “Fight! Fight!”

“I’ll have your nose so bloody you’ll look like a stuck hog!” cried the bully.

“Here, take the turtle,” Abe said, handing it to a boy. “I hate to do it, but if he hain’t got no sense he’s got to be learned some.”

The bully sprang at Abe and threw him on the ground. The fight was on. The skinny, muscular arms of little Abe, with their fists hammer hard, never missed a stroke.

For the first few minutes, as they tumbled and rolled, nobody knew who was going to win, but the small boy who was fighting for dogs and turtles *thought* he knew.

Presently the big boy began to howl, his cries bringing the teacher to the scene. As he appeared the bully’s sister begged the teacher to make Abe Lincoln quit beating her brother as she was sure he would kill him.

But the teacher said there was no danger

of Abe's killing big Joe and he wanted to see the best man win.

Over and over they kept rolling, Abe more often on top, until, when Joe bawled out his misery, Abe said, "Getting to know how a dog feels when it gets beat with a limb, ain't you?" and he hit him again.

At last the bully rolled over on the ground, face down, yelling, "You broke my nose! I'm bleeding to death!"

Abe sat upon him straddle of the back and began with both fists, beating him where boys get spanked. "If your nose has give out, I'll let it rest. There's plenty left as hasn't give out yet," and again he hammered.

The howls of the big boy increased until Abe shouted, "When you get enough, say so."

"I'm beat!" Joe wailed. "Let me up."

When he arose from the dirt his face was red with blood.

"Any blood on my ugly, skinny, poor white trash face?" Abe asked, turning to the boys. "I didn't want to beat him up, but we ain't going to have no more dogs lambasted nor no more turtles fired so long as I can help it."

He pushed his straight black hair back from his dusty, wet forehead and, turning to Joe, said, "I ain't mad at you and I won't never hurt you again if you won't hurt the dumb critters."

The turtle was put under some leaves. The next morning when Abe and Sarah reached school they found the turtle dead and the girls getting ready to have a funeral. They asked Abe to say a speech at the grave.

Abe had no time to prepare his speech and it was not long. But the girls thought he spoke well as he said, "A turtle is a better Christian than some men. They don't put fire on men's backs. The turtle is also smart. He carries his house around with him. When it rains he can crawl in. When he gets too hot he can move into the shade. If he gets too cold he can move his house into the sun. Can a man do this? Beside, the roof on a turtle's house never leaks. Did a man ever make a roof that wouldn't leak? Hurrah for the turtle!" and over the grave of the departed turtle the children shouted "Hurrah!"

There came near being another fight during this term of school, but Abe thought of a better way of settling the quarrel than with fists. The teacher said it was the best plan he ever heard of in any school he ever taught.

One noon as the boys were playing marbles and the girls were making a hop-scotch ground, a boy came running in from the woods ringing a rusty cow bell. All play at once stopped.

"That's my bell," said one of the boys, who had been playing marbles.

"Where'd you get it?"

"Our cow lost it."

"How'd you know?"

"Our cow lost a bell and we live nearer here than anybody else. Give it to me!"

"No. I found it, and I'm going to play bell-cow. I'm going to be the bell-cow and run, hooking sideways, and bellowing, and you must all run after me."

"I'll be the bell-cow myself!"

"You won't."

"I will."

"I'll show you."

Fists were doubled and the fight was about to start when Abe shouted, "Wait a minute! I know a better way."

Since Abe had whipped the bully everybody in the school, including Joe himself, was ready to hear what he had to say.

"When two men want to be President they don't bloody each other's noses, tear each other's shirts, claw each other's eyes, and pull out each other's hair," Abe said. "They let the people choose which one they want."

"How?"

"They call it voting. Everybody gets a piece of paper and writes the name of one of those two men on it—the one he wants for

President. Then the names are counted and the most names is the one for President."

"Who said so?"

"The miller's mother back in Kentuck. And once I saw the miller get on his horse and ride away to vote. We can pick the bell-cow this way."

"We haven't any paper."

"We'll use twigs instead — green and brown. Green for Jim and brown for Bill. Whichever gets the most is bell-cow."

Here was a new game. The twigs were picked, counted and passed out. The boy with the bell and the boy who wanted it each asked for three or four twigs, but Abe said they could only put one twig in for themselves.

A cap was passed. The twigs were thrown in and Abe asked Joe to help him count them. In just a few minutes they knew who was to be bell-cow. At first the boy who was not chosen was angry. But more of his play-mates had said they wanted the other boy, so there was no use to pout and he got in the game.

Soon the bell-cow was prancing through the woods, hooking right and left and ringing the bell as if wolves were in pursuit, while all the rest of the cows and calves came bellowing and mooing after.

CHAPTER XXXIII

CANDY PULLING AND HAIR PULLING

THE school only lasted a few weeks when the teacher took his blackboard and books and moved on to another place.

To Abe these weeks seemed almost as short as a few days. He had not missed an hour from school, and every hour had been a happy one. He had wrestled and romped and ran and shouted with the other boys at playtime. But sometimes he had stayed in at noon to practise writing his name, and more than once the teacher had let him read from his book.

So when school was out Abe was still happy for he could read and count much better and could write his name almost as well as the teacher could.

School was a big event in the life of the little wildwood boy, but there came something close after it that was almost as important.

The teacher had told Abe that a man named Crawford had a book about George Washington and as soon as he heard of it Abe wanted to read this book. He remembered what the miller's mother had told him about Washington, but he was sure there would be much more in a whole book.

So Abe went to Mr. Crawford, told him he was learning to read and wanted to study about the "father of his country." Mr. Crawford let him take the book, and that night Abe sat up late reading it, and when he was ready to climb into the loft he took the book with him. He was afraid something might harm it if he left it downstairs.

He tucked it carefully under the eaves and went to sleep with the thought in his mind that the precious book was safe. But that night a rain came and a few drops of water leaked through the roof onto the book, so that when Abe took it out in the morning he found a wet spot that had bulged the cover out of shape.

He felt like crying but knew this would do no good. The only thing to do was to go to Mr. Crawford, tell him just what happened and ask if he could not pay for the book in work.*

Mr. Crawford had a cornfield from which the fodder had not been stripped. He told Abe he would let him have the book for three days' fodder pulling.

To this Abe agreed, and for three days he walked the furrows of the field, tore the brown leaves from the dry stalks, tied them up and stacked them.

* See note 21.

When he had finished the book was his. The dear old Bible was now to have a rest, for Abe knew he must read the new book through many, many times before he learned all that was in it.

One day John Johnson came home from Gentryville and said Joe had invited all the Lincoln children and Dennis Hanks to come to his house to an apple roasting and candy pulling. He said he liked Abe better than any boy he knew and wanted him to be *sure* to come.

When Tildy was told she could not go she begged and cried as usual and was only consoled by Abe's promise to bring her some "goodies."

Sallie dressed herself in her best clothes. She had a new pair of yarn stockings of which she was quite proud, for she had spun the yarn and done the knitting herself. The yarn was lumpy in some places and the knitting crooked, but her mother said they were very good for first stockings. She got out the bear grease and polished her shoes until they shone. She smoothed her hair, patted her dress and shook her shawl, and when everything was ready she began watching the door.

Among the children in Joe's home was an older sister named Katie. She was fat and had red hair. She did not laugh softly like

Sallie. She talked and laughed loudly and was friendly with everybody. Sallie had never seen this girl but expected to see her the night of the party.

The first snow had fallen and the air was full of frost. The Lincoln children set out late in the afternoon and were to come home by moonlight. Part of the way through the woods they walked two and two and part of the way one behind the other. But whatever way they walked Dennis Hanks was near Sallie.

As soon as they entered Joe's home the smell of candy cooking made the children glad they had come and their eyes turned toward the kettle hanging over the coals.

When the candy was done the children went into the yard with pans, which they packed with snow. Into the snow they dropped the hot taffy, turning it into balls. As soon as Abe had cooled his plate he put part of his taffy balls into his coonskin cap and hung it outside where the candy would keep brittle, to take to Tildy.

While the boys and girls were enjoying the taffy balls, Joe's mother was preparing some taffy to pull and when they were ready she had them sit in a row before the fire.

Sallie sat on a stool by Dennis, but she noticed that Katie sat on the other side.

Pretty soon Dennis and Katie were talking and laughing as if they had known each other always. Dennis told one of his funny stories and Katie doubled over and roared with laughter. Sallie always giggled when Dennis told stories, but just now, she did not know why, she did not feel like laughing. She had on her new yarn stockings and greased shoes and Dennis had not even looked at them.

"Get your partners now for candy pulling," Joe's mother said when all was ready.

Sallie was sure Dennis would say, "I'll take Sallie." Instead he said, "Me and Katie is getting to be good friends. We'll pull partners."

When Dennis said this Abe, who glanced at Sallie, saw the corners of her mouth quiver, and while Dennis was laughing and getting ready to pull, Sallie got up quietly and went out.

She had not been gone long when Dennis turned to her place. He looked surprised and said, "Where's Sallie?"

"She went out." It was Abe who told him.

"What for?"

"There wasn't nobody to pull partners with her."

"What's John doing?"

"Pulling with Joe's sister."

"It's cold. Get her to come in. I'll pull half with her."

Abe went out and on a pile of wood near the door, with her arm across her eyes, he found Sallie.

"Come on in, Sallie."

"I ain't coming in no more. I'm going home," and he caught the sound of a sob.

"Come on in. He'll pull half with you."

"Half? Who said so?"

"He did."

"*Half?* No, he won't pull no *half* with *me*, and I'm not going in."

Abe went back into the house.

"Find her?" Dennis asked, his mouth full of taffy.

"Yep. She's crying and freezing both out there."

Dennis chewed a minute without speaking.

"She'll come in for you," Abe said. "Go out after her. It's cold."

Dennis went out to find Sallie hunched down and crying.

"What you doing out here, Sallie?"

"I'm freezing to death and nobody don't care."

"What are you doing it for? It's warm inside."

There was no answer from Sallie.

"You won't get no taffy. Come on in."

"I ain't coming in no more. I'd rather freeze."

"I thought you had more sense. Come on in. Just hear them laughing. Apples next. Come on!"

A cold breeze swept around the corner of the cabin. Dennis started tapping his feet, first one and then the other, to keep his toes warm.

"I ain't coming in no more, I told you."

"All right, then. Set there and freeze stiff. There's plenty more girls."

"Yes. One inside."

"You bet—and she's got too much sense to set around and freeze just 'cause she got mad."

"I didn't get mad."

"You did and you're as mad as a setting hen yet."

Dennis went in and said to Abe, "She's setting on the wood-pile freezing. She's mad."

"Sallie don't get mad. She didn't have no pulling partner."

"Tell her to come in," Joe's mother said. "We're going to start the apple roasting now and she won't need a partner."

Abe went out and carried the message. Sallie's teeth were chattering, but she refused to go in.

"I kinda been thinking you like Dennis,"

Abe said. "When they get chawing taffy they hold hands. And here you set and he'll be holding the other girl's hand. 'Course if you don't care, just keep sitting here. But if I was a girl and *cared*, I'd bust up the other hand holding. Better come on in."

Sallie did not move. Abe returned to the fireside, and found Dennis so interested telling the new girl a funny story he did not even look to see if Sallie was there. The apples were in front of the fire. The last of the taffy was being chewed with much smacking and laughter and nobody heard the door open quietly nor saw Sallie enter.

She stopped a moment, looking toward Dennis and Katie. The next minute and Dennis felt something suddenly yanking and pulling his hair and near his ear a voice said, "Quit it! Quit it!"

"Quit what?" he said in no soft voice as he tried to shake loose.

"You know what you're doing. Quit it! Turn loose of her hand!"

"You wouldn't let me hold yourn."

"I was getting ready all the time."

"You was all-fired slow about it."

"It always takes *nice* girls a long time to get ready. Have you quit?"

"I haven't done nuthin' else."

"Where's your hands?"

“Here,” and Dennis held his hands up full length of his long arms.

“There won’t be no more holding hands now,” Joe’s mother said. “Sallie, you set right down and have a good time with the rest of them.”

The line of children in front of the fire was rearranged and soon everybody was happy again.

When the apples were roasted a nice fat one was hung on a string. Dennis and Sallie bit at it as it swung and when it dodged them both, Dennis kissed Sallie.

Everybody laughed. The boys and girls clapped their hands and Abe said to Sarah, “Apples is almost got sense.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

“TILDY’S A PIG”

A BIG pot of rabbit had been stewing on the hearth for two hours and two big brown cakes of corn pone were ready to eat. The Lincoln cabin was full of the good smell of gravy, and everybody in the family was hungry.

Sallie and Sarah were setting the table, while Tildy kept running to the fire, sniffing the rabbit stew, dancing up and down, clapping her hands, each time she made an unusually loud spat, crying, “Bunny meat!”

When they sat down to the table Tildy held her plate, shouting, “Me first! Bunny meat! Me first!”

“You just wait a minute now, Tildy,” her mother said. “You’ve got to eat some bread, too. Give me your plate.” And her mother broke some corn bread into it, poured gravy over it, handed her a spoon and said, “When you eat this you can have meat.”

The next minute Tildy was busy, but not with the spoon. She knew a quicker way to get rid of the corn bread, and dipping the bread up with her hands, she poked it into her mouth as fast as she could, smacking and

smiling, for Tildy was always happy when she could eat.

“Just look at Tildy,” Sallie said. “She’s got gravy clear back to her ears.”

“Tildy, you quit eating that way,” and Mrs. Lincoln made her take the spoon.

But there was not much left for Tildy to use the spoon on, and almost before the others had started to eat Tildy picked up her plate, licked it off clean and held it to her mother, saying, “I cleaned it off nice for my bunny meat.”

As soon as she had been helped she began eating again as fast as she could with much smacking and happy licking.

“Tildy!” and her mother spoke firmly, “you’ve got to learn some manners. You eat like a pig. You sound like a pig. You look like a pig. Eat nice now. Don’t be a pig.”

Tildy shook her head until her curls brushed her greasy cheeks, saying, “I don’t want to be nice. I want to be a pig. I like pigs. When I get to heaven I’m going to be a pig and live in the barn where the little pig angels stay, and I’ll eat—and eat—and eat—and *never* have to wash my face.”

“If you are going to be a pig, Tildy,” Sallie said, “you better go out and live with our pig in the stable.”

“I’m going to next week,” Tildy answered.

They all laughed and said, "Tildy's a pig. Tildy's a pig," and Tildy laughed louder than any of the rest.

The afternoon of the day following the rabbit dinner the children went to the woods to gather hickory nuts. Tildy's mother said she could not go. She had coughed the night before and her mother was afraid she would get the croup.

As usual, Tildy begged and cried and said she would run away, until Mrs. Lincoln said she would find herself tied to the bedpost if she didn't behave herself.

After the children had been gone a little while and Tildy had cried her eyes dry, she started to play school with Sarah's cat.

"I'll be the teacher," she said, "and you can be Abe Lincoln. No, not Abe," she continued after thinking a moment. "You got to be a blockhead so I can box your ears. Spell 'ox' now or I'll get my hickories and warm you up 'til you can't sit down."

Mrs. Lincoln had some mending to do. She drew her chair by the fire and for a time watched Tildy to see that she did not run away. But the little girl seemed to have forgotten all about the other children in her new play, for which her mother was thankful.

Somewhat tired, Tildy's mother rested her head back against her chair and closed her

eyes. She did not intend to go to sleep and she only slept a few minutes, but when she opened her eyes Tildy was not to be seen.

The cat lay asleep on the hearth as if it had never gone to school to a little girl who boxed its ears, and Tildy's chair was empty.

"Tildy! Tildy!" Mrs. Lincoln called. "What did I shut my eyes for? I'll bet anything she's run away after the children." Then she called again, "Tildy! Where are you?" looking in the bed and under the bed, under the table and behind the clothes. She even went half way up the peg ladder to the loft, looking. But there was no Tildy.

"She's gone. I wonder what she wore?"

Tildy had a little old shawl she put on when she went out in the cold. The shawl was not gone. But a little red woollen blanket Tildy was wrapped in cold nights was not on the foot of the bed where it belonged.

"She's taken the red blanket! Dear me! She'll drag it through the dirt and sticks and stones and ruin it. And she'll catch more cold. I really must spank her."

Mrs. Lincoln went outside and called. She walked around the house calling. She went down the spring path and to the edge of the wood the children had gone through, calling, "Tildy! Tildy!" but there was no answer except the saucy twitter of a jay.

“There’s nothing to do but wait until they come back,” she said as she entered the cabin. “I hope she finds them. What if she should get lost?”

This last thought brought up a great fear, and Tildy’s mother could not work any more but kept listening for the children, and when she heard their voices she ran to meet them, shouting, “Is Tildy with you?”

But Tildy was not with them. They had not seen her.

“She’s lost! Tildy’s lost in the woods!” Mrs. Lincoln exclaimed, and lifting her apron to her eyes, she began to cry. This act started a general weeping time and when Thomas Lincoln and Dennis Hanks, who had been hunting, came in just before dark they found excitement and tears in the cabin.

“Do you think anything’s caught her yet?” Mrs. Lincoln asked.

“I reckon not,” Mr. Lincoln answered, “but she mustn’t stay in the woods all night. We’ll take torches, Dennis and John and me, and go in three directions. Abe with his hatchet and a torch must go up the creek and down the creek. Everybody must keep shouting, ‘Tildy! Tildy!’ and the one who finds her is to fire his gun so the others will know not to hunt any longer.”

Darkness soon came.

A wolf howled dismally down in the timber.

Mrs. Lincoln cried and prayed by turns and the girls listened for the shot of a gun.

For hours the search in the cold dark woods was kept up. Abe had hunted in every little cave and behind every stump up and down the creek. As he walked in the flickering light of his torch he thought of dear, pretty, saucy little Tildy lost in the woods and hoped God would look after her until she was found.

While Abe was finishing his search along the creek, Mr. Lincoln and Dennis and John had come home. At sight of them Mrs. Lincoln said, "O Thomas, maybe right now some hungry bear or wolf is eating Tildy! It almost seems as if I can hear her calling us—calling and screaming. What shall we do?" And she wrung her hands as her tears ran down her cheeks and fell on the floor.

"Ain't nothin' et her yet, I don't reckon," Thomas Lincoln said cheerfully, "but I don't see no other way than for Dennis and John to go to Gentryville and get up a hunting posse on horses."

While Mr. Lincoln was telling Dennis and John just who to call on, Abe had finished the creek search. Nearing the cabin, he sat down on a pile of wood to do some thinking. Maybe Tildy had gone out to play and was not very far. She was always playing she

was a squirrel or rabbit or 'possum and making a den to crawl into. Where had she played last? Abe could not think. Then he remembered Tildy had said she was going to be a pig, live with pigs and play with pigs in heaven.

With the thought he got up and started toward the cow shed. Surely her mother had looked everywhere, yet he hurried on.

The stable door was open. He went in and lifted his torch.

What was the red thing in the corner? Abe went to it. For a moment he stood looking with glad eyes and a broad smile, for it was Tildy's red blanket and it covered something that made an awful snoring noise.

Abe moved the blanket gently and there, under its warm folds, in a corn-shuck nest, lay Tildy, fast asleep, with one arm around the dirty little pig, which was snoring as hard as it could.

The smile on Abe's face broadened until it spread from one ear to the other. He covered Tildy and went to the cabin.

"She's found," he said as he opened the door.

"Found? Found?" they shouted.

"Yep."

"And not hurt?" her mother asked.

"Not a bit."

"Nor eaten up?" Sallie asked breathlessly.

Everybody laughed at this question and Abe said, "Come on and see."

He led the way to the stable. He went in, turned the red blanket back and held his torch over Tildy, happy and smiling in her sleep.

They all stood a moment in silence. Then Mr. Lincoln said angrily as he turned to Tildy's mother, "You said she was lost in the woods."

"I thought she was," she answered.

"If I'd set on the wood-pile and done my thinking first I'd saved a heap of leg wear," Abe observed.

Tildy's mother unwound her arm from the snoring pig. Thomas Lincoln took her in his arms and they covered her with the red blanket and all went back to the cabin like a parade.

Tildy was put on the bed away back by the wall without taking her clothes off and she never once opened her eyes.

The nearly burnt torches were tossed in the fire and everybody was happy because Tildy was safe at home.

CHAPTER XXXV

THANKSGIVING

THE Lincolns, in their one-room cabin away out in the wildwoods, were going to have a real Thanksgiving, they felt they had so much to be thankful for.

Mrs. Lincoln said she thanked God Tildy did not run away into the woods to die of starvation or be eaten by a beast. Sallie said she thanked God the rattlesnake that bit and nearly killed her was only a thorn. Sarah was thankful because her father did not kill her cat after it ate all his trap bait. Abe said he was thankful for a term of school and a copy of "Weems' Life of Washington." Tildy said she was thankful because she was going to pull every hair out of Dennis Hanks' head the next time he sassed her.

"But Tildy," her mother said, "Thanksgiving is when people thank God for doing something nice for them."

"He ain't done nothing nice for me. He let the rats get my handk'cher and he let a bee poke his stinger in my hand and a rock teared the skin off my toe. I ain't thankful."

Thomas Lincoln brought three fat turkeys

and some pelts home the day before Thanksgiving and John and Dennis took the furs to the store to trade for dried apples and sugar so they could have little fried pies for the feast next day.

It was Abe's job to go to mill and, putting a sack across the back of Old Kit, he climbed onto her and started off through the woods.

The big stones that ground the corn into meal at this mill were turned by horse-power instead of by water, as the grinding stones were turned at the miller's back in Kentucky. One end of a long sapling was fastened to the stone. To the other end the horse was hitched and made to walk round and round while the stone mashed the corn into coarse meal.

The ones who arrived at the mill first got meal first. Little Abe had a long way to go. His horse was slow and he had to wait for his turn, so that it was well after noon before he finally fastened Old Kit to the long pole and started her around. Tired and stiff-legged, she took her own time, which did not suit Abe, and in order to hasten matters he stopped and cut a hickory stick.

"Now I guess she'll move," he said, and stepping beside the old mare, he gave her a sharp crack, shouting, "Go on, you old hussy!"

As long as the sting of Abe's hickory lasted

Old Kit moved faster, but in a few minutes she was creeping as slow as ever. So Abe kept hitting and shouting, for he wanted to get home before dark.

Finally he gave the creeping animal an extra hard lick, shouting, "Go on——" but he never finished what he started to say for instead of going on, Old Kit stopped suddenly and, kicking out her heels, struck Abe in the head*

Seeing the boy fall to the ground, the man who kept the mill hurried to him. At first he thought Abe was dead, he was so still and white. Then, when he found he was still breathing, he was sure he would die and a man on a good horse was sent for Mr. Lincoln.*

Before Abe's father reached the mill a man at Gentryville had brought a wagon with straw in it, and on this bed, under a deer-skin, little Abe's still body lay waiting to be taken home.

When Mrs. Lincoln saw them bringing Abe in she thought he was dead and Sarah and Tildy began to cry.

"He ain't quite dead *yet*," Mr. Lincoln said as Abe was placed on the bed. "Maybe

* See note 22.

* See note 23.

he'll come to. Fix him some hot tea, mammy," he said to Mrs. Lincoln.

The tea was quickly made, but Abe could not swallow a drop of it, and when they poured it in his mouth it ran out again. Mrs. Lincoln bathed his head with hot water and then tried cold. They rubbed his arms and hands and feet and shook him. But it was all no use. Abe could not be awakened, though he kept breathing.

The children gathered around him while Mr. Lincoln told how Abe was walking around hitting Old Kit with a hickory and saying, "Go on, you old hussy!" when, just as he had started to say it another time and had said, "Go on——," she kicked him down.

"What's a hussy?" Tildy asked. "Do they eat you up?"

"They'd like to," Thomas Lincoln answered, laughing.

"Do they live in the woods?"

"No, in houses."

"Oh — houses like beavers build — or wasps?"

Thomas Lincoln laughed again and said, "They live in wasp houses."

"Tell the child what a hussy is, Thomas," Mrs. Lincoln said.

"It's a mean woman, Tildy, a lazy wench. She don't scrub her pots nor sweep her floor

nor cook grub for her men and she's always tongue-lashing everybody and spreading poison gossip."

"Hussy, hussy," Tildy repeated several times. "I'm going to say that at Dennis Hanks next time he pulls my hair. Maybe it'll make him mad enough to kick like Old Kit did. I wish he'd kick his own head off—old hussy."

"Tildy," Mrs. Lincoln said, "leave that word for men to call women when they get mad at them. Nice little girls don't say it."

"Abe did," Tildy answered.

"Is Abe a nice little girl?" Sarah asked Tildy. "You better talk sense."

For a long time the Lincolns sat by the fire talking about Abe, who lay so quiet on the bed.

"He looks like a little old man," Mrs. Lincoln said to Abe's father, "like he's always studying about something. I can't help thinking if he lives he'll make an uncommon man like a sheriff or an exhorter."

"More likely he'll be a school-teacher. I've often thought about the night he was born. It's a wonder him and his mother didn't both freeze that night—the twelfth of February, it was, in 1809—the worst storm Kentuck ever saw. I wasn't home. I reckon it would have gone bad with them, but a man went into

the cabin out of the storm, fixed them a fire and likely saved the baby. Maybe he was spared for something special, no telling."

"If Abe doesn't die he'll be the biggest fighter in this part of Indianny, time he's grown he can lick anything wears breeches."

"Abe's not going to be a fighter, John Johnson," Sarah said. "He don't like to fight. He fights when he has to, that's all."

"Poor little fellow. Seems a pity not to be doing nothing," and Mrs. Lincoln turned to the bedside.

"I know what I'm going to do," Sarah sobbed. "I'm going to tell my mother about Abe and she'll hear, too. Just before she went across the Crystal Sea she told Abe to take care of his sister. Abe's good to me—and I ain't got no other brother—and my mother wants him to stay here—and I'm going to tell her about it so's he'll get well. Mother! Mother!"

Calling to her mother, Sarah put her hands close to her face and bent until they rested on her knees.

"Sounds like you're praying to your mother. Pray to God," Thomas Lincoln said.

"Mother knows God a heap better than I do and she's a heap nearer where he's at. She can tell him."

For a few moments they all sat around the fire very quiet. Perhaps some of the rest of them were praying. Even Tildy kept still.

After the children had gone to bed Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln still sat up. They were drowsing by the fire when suddenly the stillness was broken by the words shouted out, "You old hussy!"

"Thomas!" Mrs. Lincoln cried, springing up. "It's Abe. Is he dying?"

Turning toward the bed, they saw Abe sitting up with his arm extended as if he held a whip and were about to strike something.

"Abe! Abe!" said his father, shaking him gently by the shoulders.

"Where's old Kit?" Abe asked, looking around in a dazed manner.

"You're not at the mill, Abe. You're home."

"Home? I thought I was driving the lazy mare. I was just fixing to give her another crack and say, 'Go on, you old hussy.'"

"You said it, all right, half of it at the mill yesterday and t'other half here just now."

Abe asked several questions and seemed to think it very strange that he should say one-half a speech one day at the mill, wait all night and say the rest the next morning.

"Old Kit must have kicked all the sense

out of my head," and Abe ran his fingers over the lump the foot of the horse had made.

"No harm done," Thomas Lincoln said, "but we thought you was a goner last night."

When the children came down from the loft the next morning they found Abe sitting by the fire as well as ever. They were all glad, asked many questions, and shouted, "Abe's well for Thanksgiving."

Never were children happier than on this day when they sat down to the table of roast turkey and little fried pies.

"All here?" Mr. Lincoln said as the chairs were placed.

"I'll count," Tildy said, holding up her hand with its chubby fingers standing out ready to count on. "Me and Abe makes two. Sarah and John makes six. Sallie and Dennis makes seventeen. Pappy and mammy makes a hundred. Yes, we're all here."

"Good," Mr. Lincoln said, and they all sat down.

Mr. Lincoln always gave God thanks at meal-time and always said the same words, which were, "In the name of Christ we thank Thee. Forgive our transgressions. Amen."

After Mr. Lincoln had said his usual thanks Tildy shouted, "I got one, too. Cover your eyes and don't peep."

She covered her eyes with her fat hands spread so she could see if anybody was looking. When all eyes were closed she said, in the same solemn tones Mr. Lincoln had used, "In the name of Christ we're glad you didn't kill our Abe. If you had we'd hate you and when we got to heaven we'd throw dirt at you. Forgive our cran-sessions. Amen."

Sallie broke the silence that followed this blessing by saying, "Don't you know you'll make God mad saying a blessing like that? Then He'll kill every one of us."

"God don't get mad," Abe said, his face smiling. "If God got mad He'd be like folks, and He's not."

"It says in the Bible He gets mad and kills folks."

"I hain't found so much of that in mine. But mother showed me where it says, 'God is love.' I like that better 'cause it makes me love God more. God's more kind than He is killing."

"Abe's mighty nigh right," Thomas Lincoln said as he sliced the turkey. "If 'twasn't so we'd be shovelling dirt on Abe's grave now instead of eating this fat turkey with him. Hold your plate, Abe. You get first helping to celebrate your being alive."

"I wonder what God let me live for," Abe said as he passed his plate.

" 'Cause you're so good and so nice and so pretty," Tildy shouted, and she clapped her hands while everybody laughed and Abe said, "It's nice to have eyes like Tildy's that homely things look pretty through."

NOTES

¹The Lincolns, originally from England, who settled in Massachusetts and Virginia, were men of means and culture. Abraham Lincoln, grandfather of the man whose name is known around the world, secured land in Bullitt County, Kentucky, near Fort Beargrass, a site now occupied by Louisville. It was at that time a defense against Indians. Abraham Lincoln was killed by an Indian. He left several sons, one of them a ten-year-old boy named Thomas. Having no home, the boy roamed about, hunting and fishing and trapping. He met Nancy Hanks at the home of a kinsman, made a bond of fifty dollars for the marriage, and was married to her by Rev. Jesse Heard in June, 1806. Tarbell's "Lincoln" contains a description of the wedding by one who was present. The certificate of marriage is among the records of Washington County, Kentucky.

²Mr. J. Rodgers Gore, in his book, "The Boyhood of Lincoln," which is founded on stories told him by Austin Gollaher, a playmate of Lincoln in his early days, devotes a chapter to the terrible storm of the eleventh and twelfth of February, 1809, and the finding of Mrs. Lincoln and the new baby by a neighbor named Enlow.

³The mother of Lincoln is described as a slender young woman with dark brown hair, dark skin, and fine gray eyes. Her face wore an expression of sadness which fixed itself in the memory of every one who knew her. Yet she was of an amiable disposition and generally cheerful and happy. Mr. Lincoln described her to Mr. Herndon, his law partner, who wrote the story of his life, as a woman highly intelligent by nature, of strong memory, acute judgment, and cool and heroic in times of danger. Above all, this little backwoods mother had a large capacity for love.

⁴The clerk in the store to which little Abe made his first visit was John B. Helm. Of the boy he says, "I remember him as a small boy who came sometimes to the store with his mother. He would take a seat on a keg of nails and I would give him a lump of sugar. He would sit there like any other boy. But these little acts of kindness so impressed his mind that I made a steadfast friend of a man whose power and influence have since been felt throughout the world."

⁵ Teachers in these early days travelled from place to place much as itinerant preachers did, stopping a few weeks where enough pupils could be secured to teach a school. Few of them had any education except the rudiments of reading and arithmetic. Several of the pupils who attended a school taught by Caleb Hazel were playmates of Abe Lincoln, then very young. These companions in later days told interesting stories of those times. John Duncan, afterward a preacher of some prominence in Kentucky, told a story of a ground-hog which he and Abe ran into the crevice of a rock and how Abe devised means to get it out after two hours of work. Tarbell and Herndon give matter of interest touching on these days.

⁶ In the story of Abraham Lincoln by Eleanor Gridley, who, as secretary of the Lincoln Log Cabin Association, visited Dennis Hanks and "Uncle Hall," Dennis Hanks says he saved Abe Lincoln from drowning in Knob Creek the day he fell off the foot-log. The claim is also made by Austin Gollaher, with the weight of evidence for the latter. There may have been two similar accidents, though this is not likely.

⁷ Dennis Hanks is authority, in Herndon's "Lincoln," for information as to Thomas Lincoln's custom of knocking Abe over. He says, "Abe was a good boy, an affectionate boy, a boy who loved his parents well and was obedient. Although anything but a rude boy, he was inquisitive. When strangers would ride or pass by his father's house . . . he was sure to ask the first question. His father would sometimes knock him over. When thus punished he never bellowed, but dropped a kind of silent tear as evidence of his sensitiveness or other feeling."

⁸ Austin Gollaher's reminiscences, as told by Mr. Gore, gives a story of the liberating of a red fox by Abe after his father had succeeded in trapping it. One of the hardest whippings he ever received was for this act.

⁹ Both Tarbell and Herndon give accounts of the migration of Thomas Lincoln from Kentucky. Herndon gives an account of the making of the raft which was loaded with whiskey, four hundred gallons of it, and tools; of the capsizing of the raft and loss and rescue of the liquor. Tarbell gives a good description of the "half-face house" built in Indiana. The story of the pigs was told by Mr. Hill and is found in the Gridley Lincoln above mentioned.

¹⁰ The dream of a strange ship sailing toward a vague and unknown shore was one which came to Lincoln many times in after-life and always preceded some important change. This was especially true during the war. Secre-

tary Welles, writing of this dream as told him, said: "He, Mr. Lincoln, seemed to be in a singular and indescribable vessel but always the same, and it was moving with great rapidity toward a dark and indefinite shore. This singular dream preceded the firing on Sumter, the Battle of Bull Run, Gettysburg and other important events. It came to Mr. Lincoln the day before his assassination. He spoke of it several times and wondered what event it was announcing now that the war was over."

¹¹ The visitation of the dread disease which resulted in the death of Mrs. Lincoln made its appearance in the vicinity of Pigeon Creek in the fall of 1818. It continued for ten years, during which time the Lincolns and their neighbors moved to Illinois. The disease was called different names, one of them "white tongue." It was marked with burning of the stomach, severe vomiting, cold extremities, restlessness and fever. In the last stages the tongue turned almost black. There was no doctor nearer Pigeon Creek than thirty miles and the disease was never diagnosed. It affected milch cows and calves much as it did humans and seemed to be what is known among cattle diseases to-day as black tongue.

¹² It is recorded that the boy, Abe Lincoln, wrote an essay on temperance which a travelling preacher discovered, took to Ohio and printed in a paper. As a man in public and private life Mr. Lincoln was always against the traffic in strong drink, although for a time he kept a gin barrel in his store in New Salem. In 1853, in a speech, he said of what was already a national problem, "The most effectual remedy would be the passage of a law altogether abolishing the liquor traffic. There must be no more attempts to regulate the cancer. It must be eradicated." His personal attitude was shown when, after the formal notification of his nomination for the presidency by a committee who were at his house, he drank to the health of the Committee with water. "Gentlemen, we must pledge our mutual healths in the most healthy beverage God has given man—pure Adam's ale from the spring."

¹³ There are different stories about the funeral services little Abe held for his mother. One is that he walked a hundred miles back to Kentucky to get a preacher. One is that an itinerant happened to be passing through Gentryville and was invited to hold the funeral. Tarbell gives the story commonly accepted, that Abe sent for a good old Baptist preacher who had known his mother in Kentucky. Of Lincoln's mother J. G. Holland says: "A great man never drew his infant breath from a purer or

more womanly bosom than her own, and Mr. Lincoln always looked back to her with unspeakable affection. Long after her sensitive heart and weary hand had crumbled into dust and had climbed to life again in forest flowers, he said to a friend with tears in his eyes, 'All that I am or hope to be I owe my angel mother—blessings on her memory.'” Herndon said of her, “She takes her place in history as the mother of a son who liberated a race of men. At her side stands another Mother whose son performed a similar service for all mankind eighteen hundred years ago.”

¹⁴ For many years the story was kept alive in the Kentucky neighborhood which knew the Lincolns and the Johnsons, that Thomas Lincoln had been a suitor for the hand of Sarah Bush before his marriage to Nancy Hanks but that she had rejected him for the more fortunate Daniel Johnson, who was jailer of Hardin County. On the first day of December the year after Nancy Hanks died Thomas Lincoln went to Kentucky and called on the Widow Johnson. He said, “Mis Johnson, I have no wife and you no husband. I came apurpose to marry you. I knowed you from a gal and you knowed me from a boy. I’ve no time to lose and if you’re willing, let it be done straight off.” The next morning they were married and getting ready to go to Indiana.

¹⁵ Tarbell’s account of the possessions of Thomas Lincoln’s new wife includes “one fine bureau, one table, one set of chairs, one large clothes-chest, cooking utensils, knives, forks, candle moulds, bedding, and other articles.”

¹⁶ The story of Tildy jumping on the back of Abe was told by Tildy to Mr. Herndon years after, when Tildy was herself the mother of a family of children.

¹⁷ The story of the “coon” hunt and tragedy of the little yellow cur as told by Mr. Lincoln is found in Herndon.

¹⁸ All stories of Abe Lincoln include descriptions of his study in the light of a fire of pine knots. Mr. Gollaher, according to Tarbell, says he would also get spice-wood bushes, hack them upon a log and burn them two or three together. Tarbell says, “Probably the boy’s mother had something to do with the spice-wood illuminations. She took great pains to teach her children what she knew and at her knee they learned much beside Bible stories.”

¹⁹ A student of Lincoln’s character has said, “The two books which made the most impression on his character were the Bible and Weems’ ‘Life of Washington.’ The former he read with such diligence he knew it almost by heart, and the words of Scripture became so much a part of his nature that he rarely made a speech or wrote a paper of any length without quoting its language or teachings.”

A facsimile of pages in the Lincoln family Bible shows the family record in Abraham Lincoln's writing as given by Herndon and Weik. The original Bible is part of a valuable collection in Chicago.

²⁰ Among the boys who went to school with Abe Lincoln were Samuel Haycroft, John Duncan, Austin Gollaher, David Turnham, and E. R. Burba. In after years some of these former schoolmates gave memory pictures of his early-day character. Burba says, "He generally seemed to be quiet during playtime, never rude, seeming to have a liking for solitude. He was the one chosen in almost every case to adjust difficulties between boys of his age and size, and when appealed to, his decision was an end of the trouble. He kept his clothes clean and although considered a boy of courage had few difficulties." Mr. John Hill says, "He was always a gentleman and never unkind or cruel." Samuel Haycroft refers to him as a "mere spindle of a boy." Another former schoolmate tells that he was always at the head of his class, was always at the schoolhouse early and often studied while the other boys played. His friend David Turnham says, "In his eleventh year he began that marvellous and rapid growth in stature for which he was so widely noted in the Pigeon Creek settlement. As he shot up he seemed to change in appearance and action. Although quick-witted and ready with an answer, he began to exhibit deep thoughtfulness and was often so lost in studied reflection we could not help noticing the strange turn in his appearance and action." Of Sarah he says, "Though in some respects like her brother, she lacked his stature. She was thick-set, had dark brown hair and deep gray eyes. She had an even disposition and in contact with others was kind and considerate. Her nature was one of amiability and God had endowed her with that invincible combination—modesty and good sense."

²¹ The work Abe did for Mr. Crawford in exchange for the spoiled book was done at a later date than the present story covers. The exact time being unimportant in the present story, it is used to call attention to one of the factors of study that entered into the character building of the boy. In after-years, at a Washington Birthday celebration, he said, "We are met to celebrate this day. Washington is the mightiest name of earth—long since mightiest in the cause of civil liberty, still mightiest in moral reformation. On that name no eulogy is expected. To add brightness to the sun or glory to the name of Washington is alike impossible. Let none attempt it,

In solemn awe pronounce the name, and in its naked, deathless splendor, leave it shining on."

²² Mr. Lincoln himself many times told the story of being kicked by the old gray mare. He considered this one of the remarkable incidents of his life. He often referred to it and Mr. Herndon says they had many discussions over the psychological phenomena involved in the operation. Mr. Lincoln's idea was that the latter half of the expression, "Get up, you old hussy!" was cut off by a suspension of the normal flow of mental energy and that as soon as life's forces returned, he unconsciously ended the sentence.

²³ Thomas Lincoln lived to be an old man. Mrs. Lincoln also lived to an old age, outliving her husband by a number of years. In 1865 she had a picture taken which can be seen in Herndon and Weik. She died in 1869 on a farm Abraham had given her. He loved her and took care of her while he lived and she was heart-broken at his tragic death.

Dennis Hanks and Sallie were married and lived to be quite old, Dennis reaching the age of ninety years. He visited the White House at Washington once. The President was very kind to him. Years before as "Little Abe" he had fished with Dennis on Pigeon Creek.

John Johnson, who wanted to be a farmer, moved to Illinois, married, and had a family and home on a farm as he desired.

Before she was sixteen years old Sarah married a young man named Aaron Grigsby. When she was seventeen a baby came. A few days after it came, with the little one in her arms, she fell asleep and her soul went to the dear mother she had never ceased to love.

Tildy grew into a splendid big girl. She was pretty and more than one young man liked her. She married a man named John Hall. She had a houseful of children and made a fine mother to them. She often told her children about little Abe and loved him always.

And "Little Abe"—is there anywhere an American child who has not heard of Abraham Lincoln? Greatest of all Americans is he and beloved as no American has ever been for, although the storms of life beat against his soul with a force and cruelty unmeasured, he bore malice toward none and had love for all.

Every great artist makes some one work better than all the others. This is called a masterpiece. Among the Great Creator's masterpieces of all the ages is Abraham Lincoln.





